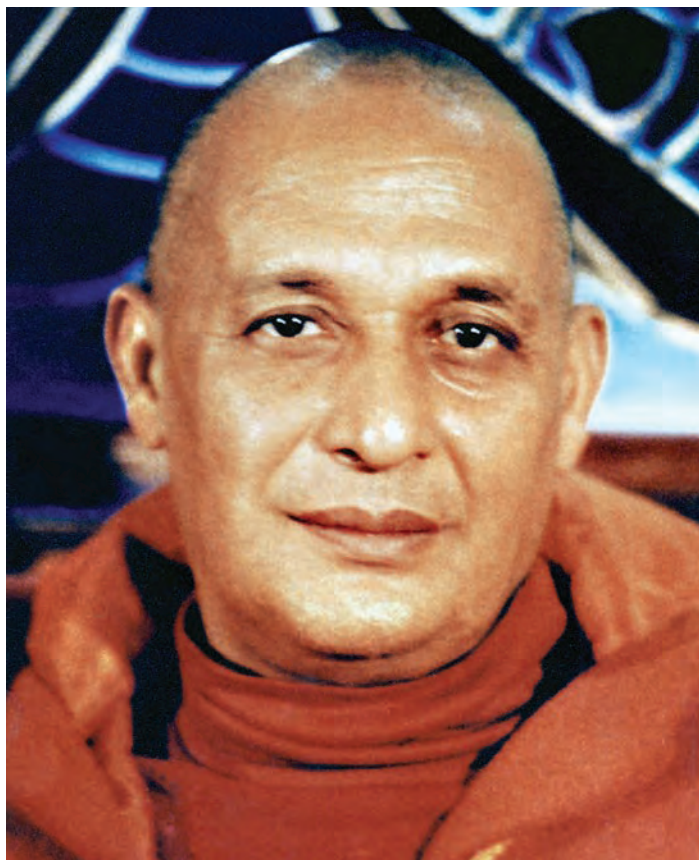


Volume III

Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Teachings of
Swami Satyananda
Saraswati
Volume III



1963–2013
GOLDEN JUBILEE

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23rd–27th October 2013

Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Volume III

*These talks and satsangs were given by
Swami Satyananda Saraswati during his 1982 tour
of the United States of America.*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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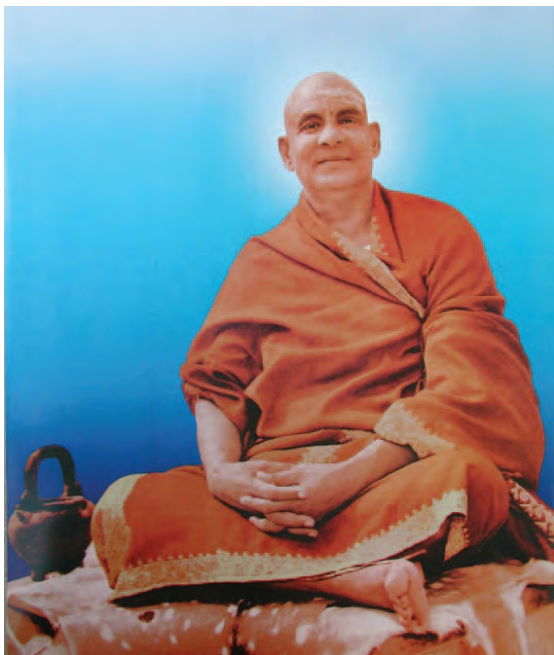
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*

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1

Satsang

*At the residence of Mr and Mrs Arbelaez, Elizabeth, New Jersey,
14 August 1982.*

How did yoga originate many years ago, how was it carried through until now and has it changed over the years?

In reality, yoga resulted from the progressive evolution of the mind of man. When animals are angry, they don't think that they should control their anger, but with the development of human consciousness, there is a tendency to balance the extreme sides of the mind.

When you are depressed on account of your family or business circumstances, you always try to balance yourself. And if you are undergoing certain experiences of unhappiness that affect your mind, what do you do? You try to make yourself equipoised. Therefore, there is a tendency in every person towards yoga. Those who do not have that balancing tendency in their personality usually go to the mental hospital. Hence we see that yoga developed with the gradual evolution of the human mind.

There is another aspect of yoga, known as hatha yoga, in which you practise physical techniques and do breathing practices to purify the body. These originated by the keen observation of the wise men of the past while they were living in tune with nature, and so the practices are named after the animals, like bhujangasana, the cobra pose, and shalabhasana, the locust pose.

You know that the human body is the outcome of evolution in the matter of nature, and in every incarnation, life has undergone a process of evolution. Man is not the only being which is conscious. All other beings have consciousness, but it is not fully developed. Even humans are not fully conscious. We are aware of our existence, but that is not total awareness. So the ancient rishis observed the animals, their behaviour and the level of their consciousness, and then formulated the postures.

The physical postures and the practices of meditation became known throughout the world during different periods of history. They spread very fast, especially in the Latin American countries, many thousands of years ago. The sannyasins and swamis of India have had the tradition of roaming for years as mendicants, and that is how they transmitted the science of yoga to different continents. They moved out of India, developed the guru-disciple relationship with people, and taught asanas, pranayamas, etc., in small groups. There is evidence of this in Latin America, Scandinavia and many other countries.

The practices of yoga have not changed at all over the centuries, but the application has changed. Many thousands of years ago, people practised yoga for the development of inner awareness. Later it was used for developing the psychic faculties. And nowadays, many people practise yoga to gain peace of mind and for the treatment of various illnesses. As a result of this burgeoning interest in yoga, much sophisticated research is being done throughout the world regarding its applications in day-to-day life.

Sometimes there are distortions in the yoga practices, but we don't mind because they still do people some good. However, in the last three or four decades, the people in America and Europe have been working hard to try to locate the original forms of the practices. So the original texts on yoga have been translated into many languages. One change has definitely taken place though. Formerly it was believed that yoga could be practised only by very few people who could

observe certain orthodox regulations, such as not drinking alcohol, not eating meat, not cohabiting, not living in cities, etc. Now all these ideas have definitely changed, and I think it is good for the time being. Yoga must come to everybody.

If new scientific techniques such as biofeedback and progressive relaxation can achieve what yoga offers for relieving stress, why continue with yoga? Or, will yoga be replaced in the West?

Biofeedback and progressive relaxation have a temporary effect. They work on the brainwaves and the nervous system, but what about the man? What about all the archetypes that are in his brain, in his personality? If the tree is ugly, you can trim it, but to kill it you must go to the roots.

The cause of man's pain is deep-rooted, but like many medicines for the body, biofeedback and progressive relaxation give just symptomatic relief and do not change the quality of the body and consciousness. In order to do that, you have to practise yoga. Then, when the autonomic nervous system is already balanced, there is no need to practise relaxation.

It is the basic attitude of the mind that produces the tension and suffering, not the external factors, so we have to work on those deep-rooted problems. Yoga calls them *samskaras*. They are the latent impressions in the mind that we have inherited, either from past lives or from our parents. It is these that are responsible for our happiness and agony. Passion, anger, greed, joy, everything that is seemingly dependent on external objects has its roots deep in our inner karma. We can try biofeedback and muscular relaxation for the time being, but ultimately we must teach man how to handle himself. We must teach the mind how to handle the mind. This is where we need yoga.

There appears to be an endless number of schools of yoga disciplines. Is this correct? If so, why are there so many?

There are many institutions throughout the world engaged in teaching yoga to their students. Some of them teach hatha

yoga, some raja yoga, some a combination of many yogas. It all depends on the type of people they are teaching. When you practise yoga, there are practices which are natural to you and others that are natural to other people, and they have to be integrated into one school. There are many people who want to learn only asanas, and among those some want to practise in a dynamic way and others want it to be calm and relaxing. Therefore, we must have teachers and schools for both. Then there are people who want to practise yoga postures just in a physical way, while others want to do them in a spiritual way, or even to help their illnesses. All of these have to be catered to.

Similarly, the practice of meditation is not just of one type. There are thousands of methods of meditation and concentration. Some schools teach mantra, others breath awareness, etc. And as far as I am concerned, all the yoga schools are doing their best to help mankind. Of course, there is one important thing: the teacher must know the science of yoga very well. Many times, some students come to India, stay for one week, then return to their country and set up schools. In one week they cannot learn yoga – it takes years.

When a person is tense, what is the best exercise to relax?

If it is a young person, he should practise hatha yoga. If the person is old, he should practise being aware of the breath. However, the best way to relieve tension of the body and mind is to practise repeating a mantra with breath awareness.

Of course, it depends on what kind of tension the person has, whether it is muscular, mental or emotional. Sometimes you are tense due to muscular factors, sometimes mental factors, sometimes emotional factors, so it is best to practise yoga for all three purposes.

Do extramarital love relationships produce negative karma even when unintentional?

Well, that is a difficult question, because I don't believe yoga has an opinion about it, but I think the whole thing should be

understood from the viewpoint of society. About a century ago, such a thing was considered very wicked, but today's society does not view it nearly so harshly, so, it's a social matter.

However, religions have given their opinion about it. Christianity, Islam and Hinduism consider it very bad, but the scientists who have done a lot of research on the behaviour of the mind and the personality believe that sexual life must be very healthy and tolerant.

Whichever side you take, it is my opinion that the most important thing to remember is that sexual behaviour should not be suppressed. If you suppress it, it will damage both the body and the mind. But you can channel the sexual energies through the practice of yoga. The sexual urge is a form of energy which you can apply in meditation, and other practices. If you do not, it flows downwards and becomes gross. Animals do not know how to sublimate the sexual energy. Nature controls those cycles; humans know how to sublimate it.

In meditation, you need a lot of energy, just as many machines won't run on two batteries but need six. For eating, thinking and the sexual act you need a little bit of energy, but for meditation you need a lot of energy. Therefore, if you use your energy in the sexual act, your battery becomes weak and you can't meditate well. So, if you want to channel and sublimate the sexual energy, you have to practise yoga and, conversely, if you want to practise yoga totally, you have to sublimate your sexual energy. However, as far as the sexual behaviour of people is concerned, I think that yoga has no particular opinion.

There is another aspect of human sexuality though, which I think you know about: the science of tantra. It is meant for married people, not for celibates or brahmacharis. It is meant for the man and woman who live together. I am not going to talk about this science this time, but what it says is that you can evolve spiritually, even though you are living the sexual life.

What is the best way to stop worrying about everybody?

This is everyone's problem. We are always worried about other people. Who is doing what? I think this is not bad really. It is

how we try to extend our awareness to other people around us. What is your husband doing? What is your wife doing? What is your son doing? What is your daughter doing? These are things we want to know. Has he gone to jail? Is he building a house? Is he smuggling drugs? We are interested in these things, and we have to be.

Interest in other people is part of our social awareness. I don't think that donkeys ever discuss which donkeys have gone where. That's because they are only donkeys. However, we are interested from the market to the parliament. In my opinion, this is a good thing. Society should be based on social awareness, where we are interested in everybody, even if they don't belong to us.

However, it is difficult for Western people to accept this. Over here, if the daughter comes back at twelve o'clock and the mother asks where she has been, she says, "Mind your own business." In the East, we want to know where you are going before you go. We want to know when you are going to get your son or daughter married, or how he is and how she is, the mother, the father. We want to know everything, not because she is my daughter, but because I am concerned; I'm part of society just as she is. We should not discourage this aspect of human behaviour. We should try to build a more conscious society.



2

Scientific Research on Yoga

St Elizabeth's Hospital, Elizabeth, New Jersey, 25 August 1982.

In the middle of this century, some important scientific observations were made in India, Holland, France and the United States. Earlier, yoga was not properly propagated, and so it has been very much misunderstood. Many people thought that it was a religion or a mystical philosophy or some sort of monastic tradition, but when the ancient Sanskrit texts were properly studied, it was found that yoga has much more to do with the total health of man. However, it is still difficult to help people to understand this today, so it became necessary to publicize scientific experiments.

Treat your personality

When Swami Vivekananda came to the United States at the end of the nineteenth century, he made the first pronouncements in Chicago and other parts of America. In one of his lectures, which was sponsored by a large library in New York, he said, "Yoga will treat the various aspects of your personality as well as help to rid you of physical illnesses, but most importantly it can revive the creative intelligence in man." He demonstrated this himself in that library by learning large textbooks verbatim and then astounded the librarians by repeating back the contents of the books, as well as the bibliography, title page, and so on. They asked him how

he did it and he told them about the mysteries of the mind and how the mind can be perfected through yoga.

After Swami Vivekananda came to America, Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh published many books on asana and pranayama. He was a medical doctor with high qualifications and he wrote important articles on asanas, pranayamas, concentration and meditation, making it very clear how these can be used to manage many diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, rheumatism, arthritis, slipped disc, lumbago, insomnia, peptic ulcer, etc. At first, people thought that he was writing only to sell books, but then they started to realize what valuable information he was communicating.

Yogic research

Meanwhile, other research was going on. A team of scientists in Poland under Doctors Romanowski, Alexandrovich and Pacek, made extensive research on the physical changes in the body, produced by practising the yoga postures. When their results were circulated to the medical authorities of the world, they were very impressive. In brief, their research brought out some very important facts: yoga postures tend to influence the endocrine glands, balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, and reduce the influence of destructive hormones in the body. They also researched *sirshasana*, the headstand posture, and found that it had far reaching effects on oxygen consumption, respiration rate, ventilation in the brain, and other processes, proving that the headstand is an important yoga posture by which we can rejuvenate the whole body.

In Bombay, the government of Maharashtra helped a yoga institution to establish a research centre with modern scientific equipment. They tested hundreds of groups of people over a period of twenty or thirty years. The behaviour of the heart, the endocrine system, the actions and reactions of the nervous system, the chemicals of the body, etc., were researched by some of the most eminent doctors. With the establishment of that research centre, yoga gradually became

known throughout the world as a science that can heal sickness of the body.

Now, of course, in India we have many yoga research centres. The government of India has its own centres such as the Indian Institute of Medical Sciences and the Council of Yoga and Medical Research. Benares Hindu University is doing good research on the chemical changes in the body with yoga postures and meditation. The director of research there, Dr K. Udupa, associated the changes in internal body temperature during relaxation with the increased longevity of animals undergoing low-temperature research. Therefore, meditation does not only change the psychological structure but the temperature of the inner body and hence probably the lifespan. There are also three big research centres in Hyderabad, Madras and Tirupati, which are providing convincing scientific data on the effectiveness of yoga in helping many types of illness.

In the last thirty or forty years, research throughout the world has shown that yoga postures, breathing practices, yoga nidra or psychic relaxation, concentration and meditation can change the structure and processes of the body and the mind.

Diabetes is a problem which can be cured by yoga. Medical science only treats the symptoms, but people in India have found that yoga can lead to a lasting cure. As a result, the yoga ashrams there are full of people being treated for diabetes. In 1956, the Indian Ministry of Health conducted a series of seminars on diabetes and found that the practice of a few postures such as forward bending, the spinal twist and the plough pose can make diabetes normal again without the need to take insulin.

Yoga in Munger

In 1964, I went to Munger to settle myself. It was not my intention to propagate yoga because I am not a very dynamic person by temperament. I like to sit quietly. However, people who knew about me came to Munger. Many of them came as disciples for spiritual enlightenment and knowledge, but most of them came with their sickness, such as schizophrenia,

drug addiction, gastritis, peptic ulcer, etc. They came in their hundreds and I could not manage them, so I had to establish a large institution. Now we have the capacity to treat seven hundred people and it is always full. Ninety percent of the people come there to get relief from sickness after trying all the other systems, and many of them come from Western countries. Mental illnesses and many physical diseases are beyond the control of modern science, but they respond to yoga.

Yoga has four main branches and all of them are used to heal sickness. They are as follows: karma yoga, yoga of action; bhakti yoga, yoga through sublimating the emotions; raja yoga, yoga through inner awareness; and jnana yoga, yoga through self-analysis and proper understanding. Kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, mantra yoga and others such as hatha yoga are all parts of raja yoga. For complete health, a synthesis of all the yogas should be practised.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Is yoga good for tension?

Yoga relieves tension. Emotional tension requires bhakti yoga. For mental tension, one should practise concentration of mind. For muscular tension, practise yoga postures.

What can one do about a constant headache?

First of all you should practise neti, washing the nostrils with saline water. Also, shankhaprakshalana, the total cleansing of the alimentary tract, should be done, then ujjayi pranayama, which is one of the breathing practices. One of the best practices for constant headache is surya namaskara, to be done every morning.

Have any results been published on work with schizophrenics?

Yes. There are many people working on this. In my own ashram there are many schizophrenics being treated. We give

them a combination of yogas – karma yoga, hatha yoga and especially kriya yoga.

In Sweden and Denmark we have the Scandinavian Schools of Yoga. There they take the schizophrenic children and give them hatha yoga practices in combination with a meditation practice known as antar mouna. After the mixed postures and vigorous pranayama, they are asked to witness the various waves of the mind – sounds, visions, sensations, past memories, in a detached way. It is found that the children get better through these practices.

In 1968, I went to Denmark for the first time. I was invited by one of the mental institutions. I was there for fifteen days and gave the patients hatha yoga practices: neti, kunjla, shankhaprakshalana, surya namaskara and bhastrika pranayama. After that, I gave them antar mouna, sometimes in the sitting position, sometimes lying down. The results were absolutely fantastic. Now mental institutions in Copenhagen have their own yoga teachers to teach the patients.

It is very hard to believe that yoga can be used to treat schizophrenia, but if you go into the principles involved, it can be seen that balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems is necessary for normal physical and mental functioning. An imbalance, if it is continuous, leads to certain abnormal behaviour. Imbalance does take place in everybody, but it changes every now and then. However, if it continues on one side for a long time on account of abnormal physical, mental or emotional factors, then abnormal behaviour occurs. By the practice of yoga, we can bring about the required balance in the actions of the nervous systems. In the *Brain/Mind Bulletin*, there are many references to work being done in this field in the United States. Swami Rama of the Himalayan Institute has also done a lot of research, as well as the Transcendental Meditation people.

How much does yoga contribute to increasing the lifespan of the practitioner?

I can't give you any statistics of course, but I think that the lifespan and inner health improve with the practices of yoga. I can't say that yoga will influence infectious diseases such as cholera, smallpox, diphtheria, etc., but the other diseases, which are caused by disturbances in the body and the mind, can be very effectively controlled by the yoga practices. Yogis who live in the Himalayas and other steady practitioners, no matter where in the world, enjoy long life.



3

Satsang

*At the residence of Mr & Mrs Forsythe, Elizabeth, New Jersey,
25 August 1982.*

When I did yoga nidra today, I could see things happening in pictures, but couldn't recognize the scenes. Where do they come from, and if they are memories, why don't I remember where I saw them?

When you practise yoga nidra, some of you can easily communicate with the psychic level of your awareness, which is also the bedrock of all dreams and visions. When the brain is cut off from the sensorial channels and actions, then you begin to see the archetypes of your consciousness. The visions that you see are your *samskaras*, the consequences of your karma.

Take a handful of seeds, put them in a packet, and they will remain seeds, but if you put them in the earth, they will germinate after some time. In this way, the daily experiences which you have had in this life or in former lives, or in the lives of your parents, all remain with you in seed form. That seed form is called *karma* and every action or desire creates one karma which remains within the deeper mind. During yoga nidra or during concentration, they come up and germinate.

Whatever thought comes into your mind is a result of past karma. If you see a beautiful thing, you want to have it, and that desire arises in your mind like a wave. In the conscious,

thinking mind, you experience it as a desire, but when the same thing appears in yoga nidra, it is seen as a vision. So, during yoga nidra you manifest, and therefore eliminate, your suppressed desires and karmas, and many unconscious blockages.

About six years ago, during yoga nidra I had a very clear vision of various places which I could not recognize. When I came to the United States, I had a big surprise when I saw the same places at my work and looking out of my apartment window. How do you explain this phenomena of seeing the future in yoga nidra?

In our waking state we work through our individual mind. The individual mind is part of the universal mind and so the consciousness of each of us is a part of the universal mind. However, we limit ourselves to being conscious only at the level of the individual mind, which functions with a fixed consciousness of past, present and future. The universal mind has no past, present or future; it is timeless. As a result of your awareness of the universal mind in meditation, yoga nidra or dreams, you can have some glimpses of things due to happen in the future.

It is very difficult to explain, but in reality the universe is like an atom. The perception of the whole universe is present in everyone. Whatever is in the universal mind is in the individual mind also. If you can relax the individual mind and stretch it, then it can have some experiences of the universal mind. However, it is not always a very pleasant experience. If you had to see past, present and future in your universal mind now, you would go crazy. Therefore, one does not usually have access to the universal realm of the mind, unless one has transcended the attachments of this mundane life.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* there is a dialogue. Arjuna asked Krishna to show him his universal form. Krishna at first refused, but Arjuna insisted. So Krishna gave him the perception of universal awareness. This experience terrified Arjuna so much that he said, "I don't want that experience

any more. I don't want to see God in this universal form. I want to see God in a human form which I can understand."

A similar story comes in the *Old Testament* of the Bible. It is very difficult to have experience of the universal mind with this state of being. But sometimes in this life we do have certain glimpses of the future just as you have said.

Is it normal to hear voices talking to you when doing meditation? Schizophrenics hear voices. What is the difference?

The inner voice is heard by everybody, so schizophrenics also hear the inner voice. In my opinion, you may not agree of course, schizophrenics have more developed human minds, though because of this they are not able to adjust with the idiosyncrasies of our society. If the saints and saviours, including Jesus Christ, were born during this century and if they were exposed to the psychologists, they would probably be called schizophrenics.

When you hear the inner voice that means that your mind is operating on a very high frequency scale. Our mind and our senses are regulated and adjusted for a certain frequency. Our ears can hear only within a certain range, not above and below, and so with the eyes and so with the mind. But when you do certain yogic and tantric practices, you change the capacity of the mind and the senses. Then your mind is able to experience many more things, and your ears are able to hear those sounds that are above or below the usual frequency.

It is incorrect for us to say that the voices which our ears can hear are the only sounds. Even now, many sounds are travelling past, but we can't hear them. Even now, many waves are passing through, maybe laser, radio, electromagnetic waves, but you can't see them. There are many astral, non-physical things that are around us but we don't know. I am talking about science. There are radio waves, but only the radio can pick them up. You can't tune in until you refine and expand your capacity.

However, if you are able to tune your mind like the radio, you can hear the music. In the same way, there are people

who, by birth or by development through certain methods, have enlarged faculties of mind. Many times the mind is able to create a sound, and that can occur in people whom we usually call schizophrenics.

If you have trained your mind and if you have control over the faculties of the mind, then you are not schizophrenic. Actually, if schizophrenics are exposed to yoga, we can regulate their experiences without changing their nature. We have come across many eccentrics, cynics and schizophrenics in the form of yogis.

If you can break the limitations of the mind, it can give you every experience. In the yoga books, they use the term inner voice. In the scriptures, like the Bible and *Gita*, they say divine voice or song celestial. These are experiences of a mind which is of the higher quality.

In your years of yoga have you ever experienced any illness?

Yes, and that was my mistake. I had always been healthy in my life, but in 1945 I wanted to do special practices of pranayama. I went up into the Himalayas to the source of the river Ganga. There I used to practise pranayama for most of the day and it was nice. But while there I started smoking marijuana, not once or twice a day, but throughout the day and night. That, of course, helped me. It kept me inside all the time, but it destroyed the efficacy of my lungs. When I came back to my guru's ashram, we found that I had TB in one of my lungs, but in six month's time I was out of danger. Now, of course, everything is alright.

I feel very tired during much of the day. How can I help myself to get more energy? I'm a mother, and I have to manage for the family, but this tiredness makes it very hard.

The first thing is that you must meditate for some time regularly, every day. It need only be ten minutes. How to do it? Sit on any blanket or carpet, spine straight, eyes closed, and

don't move at all for ten minutes – totally still Then breath in and out deeply, but in a relaxed way. During the breathing in and out, imagine that the breath is flowing in and permeating the whole brain, then flowing back out again, as if you are filling up a balloon, then emptying it. If you find that it is too much to practise for ten minutes, then do it for five.

Whether it is meditation or one or two rounds of surya namaskara, you must be very regular with it. If you practise meditation only when you feel like it and don't do it when you are not inspired, it won't do any good. This tiredness and weariness which you are talking about is due to the improper distribution of the vital energy, the *prana*, in you, and you increase and distribute this prana through asanas and pranayama also. However, if you practise this meditation I have given you, it will take less time.

The next important thing is you must never be constipated. You cannot meditate if you are constipated. The meditation will cause low temperature in the body and more constipation.



4

Sri Rama and the Awakening of Kundalini

Ananda Ashram, Monroe, New York, 26 August 1982.

In India, Ramalila is celebrated every year. To us, Rama was the son of a king, but at the same time he is the indwelling consciousness in every speck of this creation and the creative principle behind the visible and invisible universe. Also, Rama represents to us, not only the immanent reality behind this appearance, but also the transcendental reality.

Millions and millions of Hindus for many thousands of years have drawn inspiration from this great personality. Yogis consider him the incarnate consciousness and the entire Ramalila represents the discovery of the highest knowledge in one's own self. It is not merely a prince marrying the daughter of another king and going into exile, destroying the demon king, Ravana; it is something more than that.

This Ramalila has been going on, on every soil. The individual consciousness in man is trying to locate, is trying to capture and unite with the shakti, the highest power in the universe.

The awakening of kundalini is of utmost importance in man's life, and so is the experience that goes with it. Knowledge is not that important. What is important is experience. One iota of experience can immediately transport you to another realm of awareness, but knowledge cannot transport you to

any realm; you remain where you are. In order to gain the experience, it is necessary for everybody, without exception, to withdraw his relationship with the sensorial world.

The five senses responsible for knowledge and the five senses responsible for action, represent the ten heads of the demon king Ravana, and each and every sense has twofold attitudes or *vruttis*, the positive and the negative. That makes it twenty, and these twenty attitudes are represented by the hands of Ravana which you will see in the Ramalila. When the battle was on between Rama and Ravana, Rama went on shooting him. Every time one of his hands was shot off, it was revived again. When it was discovered that in his navel there was something which had to be destroyed, this demon king Ravana ultimately fell.

When awakening of kundalini takes place, many things can happen. It is not merely a psychedelic experience which we have; it is not just the hallucination which we go through sometimes. This experience is responsible for transforming the total quality of man's consciousness, thereby giving him the total power to see the subtle forces that live in us beyond our vision. The story of Sri Rama, the lila, is, in fact, depicting an entire journey of kundalini through the path of sushumna, right up to sahasrara chakra

In India, the story of Sri Rama is sung day in and day out. For us he is a personal God, but more than that he is a constant inspiration in that he worked hard to discover Sita, who was in the captivity of Ravana, the demon king. So, today you are having Ramalila. It is very nice. Try to find some time to read the story. Rishi Valmiki has written the story of Rama. Then there is another story, *Adhyatma Ramayana*, the spiritual life of Sri Rama, and a third, *Ramacharitamanasa*, the esoteric life of Sri Rama. It is important for all the spiritual aspirants to know what Ramalila stands for.

I have been talking about yoga for over two decades. I don't belong to a yoga cult. Yoga is not my tradition; my tradition is Vedanta. But I found that without a foundation, you can't raise a superstructure. If the union between ida and

pingala does not take place, if the awakening of the chakras does not take place, if sushumna is not awakened through the practices and if kundalini does not awaken, man lives in the human body but his consciousness is equal to an animal's.

It doesn't matter what type of scholar you are. You may talk about any subject. You may talk about Vedanta, you may talk about bhakti, you may talk about raja yoga, you may talk about the *Bhagavad Gita* – it means nothing! A tape recorder can also talk.

There is an inner experience which is beyond this, and that experience is absolute reality. It is not imagination; it is the formation of the quality and the quantity and stuff of the mind. How do you see the lights in this room? Through the consciousness, that is, the vritti. In the same way, you can have inner experience, the gross mind can be transformed. And with this experience you can go ahead in your search for reality, in your search for anything, you might say, even truth.

I thought it important for me to talk about yoga, and I find that people do understand it. Here you will sing in the Ramalila, but I can tell you a way of witnessing it. Every morning, sit in lotus posture, siddhasana or vajrasana with any mudra, chin mudra or yoni mudra, close your eyes, stop all physical movement and concentrate your mind on one sound: the mantra. It can be *Om*, it can be *Rama*, or it can be the mantra your guru has given you. Every day, sit down and practise mantra, and this is how you awaken in yourself the Rama consciousness. This Rama consciousness moves from mooladhara to sahasrara through sushumna.

I am happy to be at this Ramalila, an opportunity given to me by Swami Ramamurtiji. And after twenty-eight years, I have met Swami Nadabrahmanandji, after longing to see him for many years. I will only be here for a few hours. I am on a flying visit to your country, but hope to come here again sometime and live in the peaceful surroundings of this ashram for some time. I don't have much to tell you, but I just want you to do one thing – experience, and go after it!

5

Liberation through Yogic Life

*Old Cabell Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia,
27 August 1982.*

Whichever way of life we adopt for ourselves, we expect some outcome from it. Whether it is a moral lifestyle, a religious way of life or even if we want to live like a vagabond, everybody, if he is intelligent, has to understand why he chooses that particular way of life for himself. In this context, I would like to say that many people in the East and West have adopted a new way of life called the yogic life. This, of course, needs explanation and clarification.

It does not mean that when we choose the yogic way of life, we adopt a new religion, or that we become a puritan overnight, or change our external lifestyle, and so forth. Why would we want to adopt a particular way of life? Is it because we accept it as a needed change for ourselves, or as a religious way, or do we believe that by adopting that way of life we will be able to express our awareness much better?

Sometimes we reflect during the serious moments of our life and we begin to find out our relationship with time, space and creation. This, of course, I think animals don't do. Then we try to discover if there is a greater and higher consciousness within us which we have to realize and express. The style of life which we have adopted so far does not seem to be helpful in discovering this deeper

and basic consciousness that I'm talking about. It comes to every individual as a realization, but that realization alone is not enough. One needs to have some deeper experience. To have that experience, one must adjust many items that relate to one's life, and it is in this context that the yogic way of life has to be understood.

What is yoga? Earlier, people thought that yoga was a mystic cult, or that it was a branch of occultism, that it had to do more with afterlife than this life, or that it was a form of magic, or dealt with supernatural things. I do not intend to deny all these explanations, but when one really studies the scriptures on yoga, and the textbooks on hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga and other yogas, then one realizes that the philosophy, principles and practices of yoga are primarily intended to accelerate the process of evolution in man's life. It is not that yoga comes to you as a means of renunciation or a negation of the values of life, as the scholars have often said of yoga.

The branches of yoga

We know about hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, laya yoga, japa yoga and a few more. But of all the yogas, the four main ones are karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. These four are designed according to the temperament and psychic capabilities of people. For people who are dynamic by temperament, karma yoga is suitable. For people who are emotional by temperament, there is bhakti yoga. Psychic people will find raja yoga more suitable. And for people who are rational by temperament, there is jnana yoga.

However, a combination of all these has to be practised. A synthesis is much better because you are a combination of all the qualities. Maybe you are predominantly one of the four, but not only one. You may be predominantly rational, but you can't deny that you also have psychic, emotional and dynamic qualities. You may be predominantly emotional, but you can't say that you are not also psychic or rational, or

dynamic. Therefore, it is better to have a synthesis of all the yoga practices in your lives.

The classical textbooks on hatha yoga are *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Goraksha Samhita* and *Gheranda Samhita*, which were originally written in Sanskrit. The most important textbook on raja yoga is the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali. If you make a study of these textbooks, you will come to an important conclusion about the aim and aspiration of yoga.

Why do we practise yoga at all? Is it because we want to negate the experiences of this mundane life, or is it because we have become aware of the limitations of human consciousness which is totally dependent on the senses, the sense objects and the sense experiences? Then we ask, “Is it possible that experiences can be had without bringing in the senses and the lower faculties of human beings?” And it is at this juncture that yoga in many forms comes to pass.

Free thyself

The yogic way of life should not, however, be equated with the religious way of living – do not drink wine, do not eat meat, do not do this, do not do that has nothing to do with the yogic way. Sometimes these injunctions do help a person to cure his sick and ailing willpower and to correct his habits, but the yogic way of living has nothing to do with the religious way of living and the puritanical point of view. This should be quite clear.

Yoga is very clear about it. Once you transform the quality of mind, once you transcend the ordinary level of awareness, your addictions change and your attachments are properly adjusted. It is, therefore, not necessary for a guru or for a teacher to tell the disciple not to do this and not to do that. But why does this happen? We tell people not to do this or not to do that because they have a very low quality of consciousness. However, once your consciousness becomes unfettered and its limitations are removed, the awareness soars high into the deeper forms and then the external life becomes unimportant.

Many times people want me to talk to them in an orthodox style about the yogic way of living. What is yoga after all? It is not a religion – far from it. I am not criticizing religion, but I want to make it clear that yoga and religion are entirely different. Of course, you may be a religious person practising yoga, but this does not mean that religion and yoga are one and the same.

In religion you have a cult before you, you have a faith before you, you have a set goal before you, you have set values before you, but in yoga the aim is to make the consciousness free, unfettered, unlimited, beyond names and forms. Sage Patanjali, at the very beginning of the *Yoga Sutras*, says, “Yoga is total control over all the functions of awareness.” Therefore, those who are keen to experience yoga should concentrate more on the practices rather than on a lot of rules and injunctions, such as the way of eating, the way of sleeping, matrimonial relationships, or social interactions. These will introduce a very negative element in the realm of the mind which will interfere with the quality of your experience.

Remember that every inhibition, every suppression, every faith and every belief becomes an experience, and it becomes the limiting agent of your other possible experiences. In the higher practices of yoga, the inner experiences are affected and influenced by your personal philosophy and by your personal approach. Hence, if you concentrate only on the practices, then the quality of experience will be unadulterated.

Hatha yoga

Take, for instance, the hatha yoga techniques which balance the autonomic nervous system and are the foundation and bedrock of the yoga practices. When you are able to maintain a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems in the body, when the twin flows of energy in your system are regulated and become harmonious, then that automatically improves the quality of your mind.

However, when the relationship between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems is disturbed, and there is imbalance between the two, then the quality of your consciousness will not be pure and will not be genuine, even if you take the best possible diet and live the best possible religious life. Even if you are a man of compassion, a man dedicated to charity and love and a very honest person, still you will experience unhappiness, frustration, nervous depression, everything that an ordinary person experiences, if those physiological systems are out of balance.

It is not enough to be just a good person; you have to be a person with total balance, not only within the realms of principles and philosophies, but within the processes that are responsible for the natural functions of your life, the mind and the body, the systems that are such an integral part of you. It is not enough to just create a balanced philosophy.

It is good to have a good philosophy, I know. It is good to have a good mind. It is good to have a good attitude towards other living beings, but it is more important to create balance in the realm of the primitive nature, the nature which is responsible for the life that you have. You have not created life; you don't know what is happening to you. You don't know how you are thinking; you don't know the permutations and the combinations of the mental and the physical energies, and the life principles that are taking place. There is a natural law regarding this, and that law is very scientific.

Yogis have realized the law of life, the interaction between consciousness and matter, purusha and prakriti. If you read the books on tantra, they talk about Shiva and Shakti, the masculine and the feminine powers. And if you read Samkhya philosophy, it talks about purusha and prakriti, consciousness and matter. The interaction between consciousness and matter is responsible for a quality of manifestation, of experience. You are happy or you are not; you are frustrated or you are not. This is the result of the interaction that has taken place between matter and the conscious principles of your life.

These two principles will have to be adjusted by hatha yoga, *ha-tha* meaning balance between the sun and the moon, balance between matter and consciousness, balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

Pranayama

Next we go to pranayama, the breathing practices. You have read a few books that say, “When you practise pranayama, you are benefited because you inhale more oxygen and you expel more carbon dioxide”, but that is a very elementary explanation. I know very well that you do inhale more oxygen, but ultimately you do not increase the quantity of oxygen in the body. That has been scientifically investigated. Pranayama has to do with the interaction between the two hemispheres of the brain.

When I studied yoga, I was introduced to pranayama as breathing exercises, and today after forty-two years of my own studies, and following the scientific experiments that are being done throughout the world, I have come to the conclusion that pranayama and breathing exercises are two separate activities. How to do pranayama? First take a sitting posture, either the lotus posture, padmasana, or the adept’s posture, siddhasana. It is sometimes said that you can do pranayama in a chair, but that is breathing exercises, not pranayama.

So, you sit in the posture with the eyes closed, inhale through the left nostril, exhale through the right nostril. Then do the reverse, and continue from side to side. Whilst doing this, you are doing more than just inhaling oxygen and exhaling carbon dioxide. In fact, with every inhalation, you are creating activity in one of the two hemispheres of the brain. When you inhale with your left nostril, you are contacting and interacting with the right hemisphere of the brain, and when you are inhaling through the right nostril, you are affecting the left hemisphere of the brain. Thus the breathing pattern affects the quality of consciousness.

In this way, the fivefold pranas in the body, from top to toe, are balanced. It is not possible for me to go into detail about

it now. The fivefold pranas, known as prana, apana, udana, samana and vyana, are responsible for five major activities taking place in the body. This results in the balancing of the two hemispheres of the brain and in this way, inner awareness flourishes. You become aware of the inner being. The aim is liberation.

What is liberation?

Hatha yoga and pranayama are just two examples of the importance of physical practices in improving the quality of consciousness. Therefore, all people who want to live life in yoga should do so with great care so that they don't make yoga another religion, because the very object of yoga is to liberate the person from his limitations. If you misinterpret the yogic way of living, you are jumping from one limitation into other, and any limitation, whether it is a yogic limitation or a religious limitation, will not help you to liberation.

I must explain what I mean when I use the word liberation. The philosophy of tantra explains what liberation is: "When the mind can function beyond its given definitions and targets, when the mind can conceive, perceive and cognize beyond the usual boundaries, then the two elements of matter and consciousness in the human body, in the human mind, and anywhere in your existence, are separated. The processes of separation of the two elements in the body is liberation." For example, from milk you separate butter; that is liberation. From matter you separate energy, that is liberation. Liberation should be not understood in the religious sense; it has to be understood exactly, in a scientific sense.

Matter is never homogeneous; nothing is homogeneous. The body is not homogeneous. It is a composition of various elements together. In the same way, life itself is a composition of two elements: matter and consciousness. They live together. Matter is in total union with consciousness, and that is called manifestation, that is called creation.

During the practice of yoga, you have to separate them. In meditation (dhyana yoga), in kriya yoga, in raja yoga, in

bhakti yoga, in any form of yoga, matter and consciousness have to be separated. This separation is known as liberation, and it is possible when the practices of yoga are adhered to.

Choose carefully

It is not hatha yoga only that is important, or even karma yoga, or any other individual practice. What is important is a balance of the most appropriate ones. Some people emphasize, “Oh, bhakti yoga is a very great yoga, there is nothing like it.” Others say, “Oh, I don’t meditate, I just do a few asanas and pranayama, that’s all.” This overemphasis and overevaluation should be checked. It is not important which yoga you like to practise, but it is important which yoga is suitable for you.

If you can handle the patterns of your mind, the *vrittis*, easily, then you can practise jnana yoga, or you can practise raja yoga easily. But if you are not able to handle the patterns of your mind, if you are trying to concentrate on an object and suddenly you forget where you were, if you cannot hold your mind on one object even with great effort, then you must carefully choose your category.

It is not your liking for a type of yoga that is important; it is your particular sickness that needs a particular yoga. It is no use saying, “Oh, I’ve read many books on raja yoga, I’m very much impressed by it”, or “Karma yoga, the yoga of selfless action – beautiful! I think karma yoga is a nice yoga.” No. It is not karma yoga that is a nice yoga; it is not bhakti yoga that is a nice yoga. It is the most appropriate yoga for you which is the best.

For a particular sickness, you need a particular medicine. So it is with yoga. If your mind is one-pointed, if your mind is dissipated, if your mind is distracted, if your mind is depressed, then you need that kind of yoga. Therefore, you must first decide which category you belong to. In yoga, it is taught that each individual consciousness is one of the following: (i) dull consciousness, (ii) dissipated consciousness, (iii) oscillating consciousness, (iv) one-pointed consciousness, (v) controlled consciousness. According to the quality of

consciousness you have, you have to take to the appropriate practices of yoga.

I never say that everybody should practise any form of yoga, such as hatha yoga or meditation, because it may not be appropriate for some. Many times, for instance, I have observed in scientific experiments that when a particular aspirant is meditating, his cardiac rate, his blood pressure goes down too much, and his inner body temperature drops too low. I don't say that meditation is a negative thing, there is nothing wrong with meditation, but in this case, the effects of meditation are negative. If he continues with it, he becomes more angry, more intolerant, irritable, and sometimes develops a criminal mind. It is not that this form of yoga is bad, but that he has not chosen the right type of yoga for himself.

By reading the books, you like something according to the capacity of the author to explain it, but you must also study your own problems – the problems of the mind and the body. Therefore, when you are trying to live yoga, first of all, you must study your own problems, then relate them to the yoga. Karma yoga is very dynamic, bhakti yoga is for the emotional type of people, raja yoga for the psychic type of people, and jnana for those with rational temperaments. But a synthesis of all those yogas should be practised.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Can you explain more fully the different yogas for different temperaments?

Karma yoga, the yoga of selfless action, or action without attachment, is best for those people who are dynamic by temperament. They do not want to meditate, and actually cannot meditate. They do not want to practise hatha yoga or devotional practices or contemplation. They want to work and express themselves through work.

Bhakti yoga is the yoga for people who are emotionally rich. They want to love everybody. They have a charitable

nature. They have compassion, mercy and understanding for all the beings in this creation. They have so much emotion in them that after giving their love to the children and the family members, they still have a surplus, and these surplus emotions should be properly directed. If they are not properly directed, then they will create problems in the mind. Bhakti can be practised by offering the surplus love to guru, to God, to humanity, to everybody.

Raja yoga is for the psychic temperament. In raja yoga you are trying to discover the deeper forms of mental experience. Everybody is aware of the objective experiences, seeing objects like flowers, trees, men, women, children, animals, things, but there are deeper forms of experience than this. The external experience that you have through the eyes, the ears and the other senses is not the ultimate. You can experience the mind without external objects. You close your eyes and this inner realm ultimately leads you to the expansion of consciousness. When your consciousness expands and becomes one with totality, it is called samadhi.

The fourth type of yoga is called jnana yoga and is for rational type of people who like to know. Through the process of introspection, they hear the truth, and by reflection on that they can have a direct cognition of the wider truth. These are the four yogas for the different temperaments, and I have been telling everybody that a synthesis is needed. You first realize what temperament you predominantly belong to, then specialize in the yoga that is most appropriate, but devote some time to the other practices.

You spoke about matter and consciousness being separated during meditation. Could you please explain this more fully?

The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali talk about three stages; in Sanskrit they are known as: *pratyahara* (isolated of the brain from the senses), *dharana* (awareness of one point) and *dhyana* (total awareness of the point, but not of the meditator). It is that time that matter and consciousness, related to your

experiences, are separated. When you are meditating on a flower, for example, it is a combination of both matter and consciousness. When you become aware of any object, it is a combination of matter and consciousness. Now if you concentrate on the flower and try to see the flower within yourself, and make it clear, there comes a moment within the realms of your experience when you as a meditator cease to exist. There is only the experience, not the experiencer; at this point, matter and consciousness are separated.

What is the difference between Vedanta and Samkhya, and what is their place in yoga?

Yoga is the practical science through which you realize the experience of Vedanta. Vedanta is the theoretical exposition of the reality of matter, energy, Brahma, etc. If you say there is only one Brahma, the absolute, and through maya it has created this and that, it is alright, but have you experienced that? Yoga gives you a way to experience the knowledge of Vedanta. Knowledge and experience are two different processes. Experience is related to intuition. Knowledge is usually related to intellect.

Samkhya is more or less a dualistic theory, whereas Vedanta is pure monism. But if you relate these two philosophies to your own experience during the long sadhana that you have been doing, you will appreciate that duality is one state of our experience.

Therefore, we can accept the dualistic philosophy of Samkhya and also the monistic philosophy of Vedanta, because both lead to the evolution of man's experience. For example, you start to practise yoga. Where do you start? Do you start with monism? No, you start with multiplicity. In your mind you have the awareness of experiences, and objects, and time and space; not monism, not even duality, but multiplicity. But through pranayama, this kriya, this technique or that trick, you try to bring those multiplicities closer, and finally there is only duality. Or let us say there is a trinity: the meditator, the object of meditation and the

process of meditation. There is a triple awareness. Now, you have brought this multiplicity of your consciousness down to triple awareness. This triple awareness can be dissolved by more powerful techniques, until you have only awareness of the experience, and not the awareness of the experienter.

In your scheme of sadhana, which you have been doing for the last twenty, thirty or forty years, once upon a time, you have been a Samkhyan; you have been experiencing duality. Only lately, on account of persistent spiritual efforts, have you become aware only of the experience, so you are now a monist.



6

Satsang

*At the residence of Danamurti Hawley, Charlottesville, Virginia,
28 August 1982.*

Is it necessary to have a guru for one to achieve self-realization, or can a person guide himself by taking clues from his environment, whether it be from books, etc.? What is guru?

In order to learn any science, you need a teacher. Yoga is a science. Self-realization is also a science, and for that you need a teacher. But the teacher is not a tutor; he must be a guru. In order to experience self-realization, one has to open the doors to inner awareness. If you practise yoga, meditation and other sadhanas with the help of books, you can have a lot of good experiences, and if you are endowed with intuition and a clear mind, you can go very far in spiritual life.

However, everybody is not endowed with intuition. They have their own emotional, intellectual and intuitive limitations. Therefore, it is safer to have a guru who can guide you along the path of self-awareness, or self-realization. The point is clear. It is possible for a select few to tread the whole path by themselves, but not for everybody. And if we make the mistake of telling people that they can do it without a guru, then we will be encouraging a sort of risk.

When you are treading this path, the consciousness changes and experiences also change. Sometimes you begin

to have changes in the quality of perception, and at that time you don't know what to do. You don't know whether you are going crazy or losing yourself, or whether what you are doing is right. You can become very frightened; this doesn't apply only to spiritual life. If you take some kinds of heavy drugs, you can also get changes in consciousness and not know what to do. If, when you are practising meditation or any other sadhana, the experience changes or the awareness changes, and you are feeling something unusual, whom are you going to approach for the right answer?

Now, another point. Guru is not an external reality; that is the truth. Guru is an internal reality. The enlightened being is in everybody. You too have it, but it is beyond communication. How do you contact that enlightened being within yourself? That enlightened being, that guru, is the transcendental reality. Your awareness is the mundane awareness, and there is no communication between them. In order to have realization of that inner guide (inner guru), an external guru is necessary.

It is a simple law; in order to detonate a bomb you need a fuse. Without it, you can do nothing. You have a cartridge, but you can't use it. The cartridge has to be put into the rifle, and then it can explode. In the same way, the inner guru has to manifest. This manifestation of the inner guru can occasionally take place in intuitive people spontaneously, but in most people it is not possible. They need an outer guru to help them.

The literal meaning of *guru* is not teacher or tutor. It is a Sanskrit word, meaning 'dispeller of darkness'. As you bring a light into a room, the darkness is dispelled and everything in the room is illuminated. In the same way, within yourself, within your inner life, there are many things which you are not able to see because there is total darkness there. At the most, with a little meditation, you can have a few visions, but not too much. It is very rudimentary. Sometimes boys and girls take drugs and have a lot of experiences, but that is nothing. It is scratching the crust of the consciousness. All the experiences

that we hear about through drugs, or through this meditation or that meditation, only scratch the upper crust.

The inner experiences are fantastic, as you will read in the Upanishads, the books on nada yoga, and others. They are the experiences related to realization, to the invisible realms of the universe, to the real spiritual life. They are not expressions of your subconscious mind. In order to illuminate those experiences you need light, and that light is the inner light.

What is the inner light? There is external light and there is internal light. The external light is the light of the mind, and with the light of the mind you are able to perceive the external objects and their meanings. Some people have less light and some people have more light. Those who have less light have dull perceptions and those who have bright light have better perceptions. They can relate themselves to nature, to the objects, to music, to people, and the many other things around them. That is through the external light called the mind. In the same way, you have inner light which has nothing to do with the mind, but has to do with intuition. In Sanskrit it is called *atma*, the light of the self.

It is with the light of the self, the *atma*, the intuition, that the inner knowledge and experiences are perceived. That inner light is known as *guru*. That is the literal meaning. So, I am not your *guru*; he is not your *guru*; none of you can become someone's *guru* but you can become a detonator to the *guru*. I can help you to express your inner *guru*. You need me in order to realize that inner *guru*.

Because we are not able to see the inner light, we call the outer guide, *guru*. Hence, we must use two terms, 'guru' and 'satguru'. So the word *guru* is used to mean the external person, and the word *satguru* is used for the inner guide. Therefore, sincere aspirants, seekers on the spiritual path, must remember that the *satguru* is within them, but with the outer mind they cannot have any communication with it. Hence, they need a *guru*, and that *guru* will help them to have realization of the inner light or inner guide.

Can energy or matter be created, or is there just a finite amount that is transformed continually from one form to another form?

I shall try to reply to this question from the tantric point of view. It will be better than from the point of view of physics although, there is basically no difference between the two.

Matter and energy, according to tantra, appear to be two, but they are interconvertible. Matter can take the form of energy, and energy can be condensed to matter. In order to maintain the creation there has to be the duality of energy and matter, and when the energy and matter interact with each other, then there is creation, there is expression (*maya*).

In tantra, energy is known as *shakti*, which in Sanskrit literally means 'who is capable of accomplishing anything'. The tantric counterpart of Shakti is known as Shiva, which in tantric philosophy represents matter and consciousness at the same time. In modern science we have the concepts of consciousness, matter and energy. As the higher consciousness, *Shiva* is the indweller of everything. Shakti is the creator, and it is through Shakti that matter becomes capable of existence.

According to the philosophy of hatha yoga, within the physical body, the ida and pingala nadis represent consciousness and energy, and the interaction between consciousness and energy is called 'life'. The energy is infinite. As you transcend matter, you become aware of this infinite energy, but as you descend into matter, the energy seems to be very limited in quantity. Mind, senses, body, karma, incarnation, the whole of life limit the experience of energy.

We are not able to have access to the unlimited energy because of the mind and the physical factors. Hence, in order to realize this infinite, unlimited energy, you will have to transcend the senses, the prana, the mind, intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahamkara*), all these. As you go on transcending them, you come face to face with the experience of infinite energy, and the energy is conceived in many spheres, not only as

spiritual energy, but as anger, passion, peace of mind, hunger, desire, forgiveness, charity, life; everything is an expression of energy.

So, the energy should not be realized as only a spiritual essence. We call that spiritual energy, but whatever can be seen in this world, from the tiniest object to the biggest bodies like the sun and the moon, are nothing but manifestations of energy. If the energy were withdrawn, there would be no existence of matter. Matter cannot exist without energy – this is the first principle of tantra.

One of the finest books on tantra is called *Ananda Lahari*, ‘Wave of Bliss’ composed by Adi Shankaracharya. At the very outset the book says, “Matter cannot exist without shakti.” If there is no shakti, there is no creation. If there is no shakti, there isn’t even mundane awareness. So we must perceive shakti not only in the spiritual sphere, but in every sphere. Therefore, shakti is infinite.

There is a ceaseless automatic process. On account of the inherent laws of nature, energy forming into matter and matter again returning to energy is continuous. The process of creation, the process of expression is maintained throughout the three gunas, sattwa, rajas and tamas, controlling the whole process (*sattwa* meaning equilibrium, *rajas* meaning dynamism and *tamas* meaning energy at rest). On account of these three gunas, sattwa, rajas, and tamas, the energy is being transformed into matter, and matter is returning to energy, like a cycle all throughout. We don’t even know it happens. It is happening even within our body.

When you turn to spiritual life and you begin to have your spiritual adventures, what is happening? You are using more and more energy towards inner life, rather than setting it to the formation of matter. Ordinarily, energy is forming into matter all the time, automatically, but when you go to a guru, to spiritual life, or practise meditation, etc., all these practices stop this natural process. That energy is reversed in order to have inner experience, and that inner experience or *atma jnana*, self-knowledge, *samadhi*, god-realization, is

the transformation of the shakti into spiritual awareness. Therefore, shakti is infinite; it is not limited.

What is your definition of kundalini and the chakras?

You should read my books on this. My definition of kundalini is not my independent definition. I don't have any philosophy on it. I go by the tantric tradition, and the tantric tradition is this.

Kundalini is situated in mooladhara chakra. Just as the eye is the seat of vision and the ear is the seat of audition, mooladhara is the seat of intuitional energy. It is situated behind the cervix of the uterus in women and in the centre of the perineum in men. Through the practices, the energy wakes up from mooladhara chakra, then it moves through swadhisthana, manipura, anahata and vishuddhi. Then it is established in ajna chakra; the union takes place in ajna chakra. This is the popular tantric definition and philosophy which I accept and adhere to.

I have also come across many other definitions of kundalini by other authors, and I have given a lot of my time in order to investigate those. For instance, I have read the theosophical concepts by Leadbeater, Allcott and Blavatsky. It's not possible for me to understand everything. I understand science, but I'm not so much an occultist or a mystic. I know about the autonomic nervous system (sympathetic and parasympathetic), and I know the brain. I know that the brain has lots of sleeping areas. I know the effects of the glands in the body, and their correlation with the different psychic centres, like ajna chakra (the pineal gland). So, as a student of modern science, I have more acceptance of the ancient definition of tantra.

Do gurus foresee a time when there will be a public display of mystical power, or the public revealing of past lives of the spiritual masters or the prophets, as an incentive to public interest in yoga, meditation and self-realization?

I don't think so, because I don't believe that everybody will become spiritual, or should become spiritual. It is simple

evolution. Some children are in primary school, some are in high school, some in college, some in university. If everybody is put into the university, I don't think anything is going to happen. Some people will still be idiots, some will be enlightened and the rest in between.

There are some souls who have lost their way, and there are some who don't know that there is spiritual life at all. Every Sunday they go to church; that's enough for them. Or every morning, Hindus just place a little flower or incense stick on their shrine; that's enough for them. Very few people are so sincere that they do asana, pranayama, etc.

There has to be enlightenment, and the teachers must prepare their students for this. But it is absolutely wrong for me to think that everybody is going to get enlightenment during my lifetime, that I must work hard somehow, that I must do some miracles so that at least some people will come to me. Four billion people! How can I teach them all yoga? It's not possible.

Gurus must have committed disciples, if they want quality. If I had a mob behind me because I was performing miracles, I couldn't be a teacher; I would only be a leader. I could be a preacher, or I could be a leader, but I couldn't be a guru because it is not possible for one single person to attend to the spiritual evolution of thousands and thousands of people. There have to be many, many gurus.

Anyway, even if we display some of these *siddhis*, or supernatural powers, I don't think people are going to be convinced. Christ was crucified for that. He did many things, and when asked what it was all about, he even reiterated the prophesies of the old books. Nobody believed him. They said he was a magician. They did not believe he was the son of God. You believe it and I believe it, but I don't think that even any of his disciples believed it.

They were admiring his spiritual qualities because he was healing the sick, bringing dead people to life, creating meals for five thousand, and those things. If he had not done them, would they even have cared for him? They did not know that

he had a pure heart. Did any of his disciples even see that he had a pure heart? Did any of them believe him when he said, “Purify your heart, and make yourself completely empty?” No, they only saw that he was healing hundreds. They said, “He’s a great man.” But what happened at the end? One of his chosen disciples betrayed him, and his closest disciple denied that he even knew him.

It happens with many other people. Those gurus who get disciples by displaying miracles, will be betrayed. Miracles, *siddhis*, have a severe limitation; they rebound on the doer. That is a law of nature. Supernatural performances are against the law of nature. All the yoga texts have reiterated it time and again. But, of course, like Christ, like Krishna, miracles are done. Rama did not do them; Buddha did not do them; Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not do them.

It is the divine will which has to flow through me, not my yogic powers. If it is the will of God that something should happen – let it happen. Why should I do it? The Divine has to make me an instrument; I don’t deny that. But, if through my yogic accomplishments, I am able to handle supernatural phenomena, and I do so, it is against the laws of nature. Nature penalizes all those who have done it, and as a result of their suffering, their spiritual movement gets a jolt.

We have to accept the reality of nature and the process of evolution of consciousness. Those people who are eager to follow spiritual life, either through karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga, Christ yoga, or Satyananda yoga, we give them the way. Those people who want to remain in the grossness of life, let them. Let them suffer, because through suffering you also awaken your soul.

7

Dynamic Awareness

Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, 28 August 1982.

Yoga is a science of health, it can heal the sick body and the sick mind, but we have visualized yoga as a path, not only for a particular section of people, but for the whole of humanity. This is not just my interpretation. Thousands of years ago, a great event took place when Sri Krishna instructed Arjuna on the battlefield and initiated that commander-in-chief into the secrets of the science of yoga. I'm sure Krishna did not mean to teach Arjuna a science which would merely give him a few psychic visions, or a little relaxation, or a bit of mental massage. Krishna meant more than that.

I know you know something about the teachings of Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* outline the eighteen systems of yoga into which Krishna initiated Arjuna. The first chapter begins with the yoga of despondency, and the last chapter is a pronouncement of the idea of devotion.

Study and understand

Now, what yoga did Krishna teach Arjuna? Did he mean that Arjuna should retire from life? Did he mean that Arjuna should have a few psychic visions in the morning in meditation, see some sort of television inside, oceans, rivers mountains, angels, and so on and so forth? Or did he mean

to create a dynamic, internal awareness in Arjuna? What was Arjuna's condition?

He was confused; he had many conflicts; he was not clear about his responsibility, and he was nervous. In the first chapter of the *Gita*, it describes Arjuna as having all those symptoms of one who is having a nervous breakdown, and it is for that moment in everyone that yoga is the path. It is also for such a community that the path of yoga is a complete life. You can live it day and night.

Therefore, we have to study, understand and practise yoga in such a way that it can change the nature, the quality and the responses of our external consciousness as well as our internal consciousness. If you become aware of your inner life, but you are not in a position to deal with the violent and alarming things of life outside, there is a split in your personality. Within you there is an experience of bliss, but when you come out you face a total disaster, and the mind and the body become unwell.

That is where yoga has failed in recent centuries. Not because it is an incomplete science, but because we understand yoga as an incomplete concept. I don't mean to criticize any of the branches of yoga, and I'd be the last person to do it, but to interpret yoga, to present it for the good of humanity in a lopsided way does more harm than good. A system whose practices have precise and known effects must be presented in a balanced manner, so that it works effectively on the different aspects of our being.

Integration

I teach hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga, kriya yoga, laya yoga, kundalini yoga and tantra, and these should be integrated. If you just practise a few techniques of hatha yoga or meditation, and you think you will achieve everything in life, you are unnecessarily overemphasizing one aspect. Raja yoga and jnana yoga develop your head, bhakti develops your heart, and karma yoga develops your hand. Simultaneous development of head, heart and hand is something which is needed.

In the last three or four decades, yoga has come to be known to people throughout the world. Swami Vivekananda brought it to the western world towards the end of the nineteenth century. Later, Paramahansa Yogananda came, then Swami Sivananda Saraswati and his disciples have brought the message of yoga all over. Now intelligent people have begun to investigate it, and they have found that yoga definitely heals sick bodies and minds. However, there is something more that yoga can accomplish which will be in the interest of the larger community of human beings – it can change the level of human consciousness.

If you get better from yoga, that is a personal benefit you derive, but it is also necessary for the entire humanity to change its level of consciousness, to be able to think in a different way, a better way. This change in the collective consciousness takes place by accepting the synthesis of yoga. Therefore, yoga is a path towards greater human evolution.

We often realize that within ourselves there are a lot of conflicts; we are very confused; we are not able to decide what we should do and what we should aim towards. Admittedly, everybody has his own philosophy and his own way of thinking, but when we practise yoga, we achieve clarity, and with that clarity we can visualize reality for ourselves. Then, when we visualize it, we have a way for ourselves.

The path

I am not talking about the external path; I'm talking about the inner path. Externally, we generally know what we are and what we are supposed to do in business and family, and this and that. But there is an inner path of which mankind is usually not aware. Most people don't even know it exists. We know that we die, and some people believe that they are reborn and some don't. Most people know that they have to fulfil their social obligations, family duties, and they are satisfied with that.

However, unconsciously, everybody, even an ignorant person, is searching for a path, and that path is known as

the inner path. When you discover that inner path, then you automatically feel happiness and peace outside. But when you do not discover that path or don't know about it, you experience unhappiness. External unhappiness created by worldly matters is merely an expression of that inner dissatisfaction and inner ignorance.

Why are you unhappy? Why are you restless? Why do you experience agony? You say, "Well, my husband is like that . . . my son is like that . . . my business is not going well . . ." No, it's not true. External unhappiness is only an expression of internal unhappiness and ignorance. Therefore, it is necessary for everybody to find that inner path and that inner path is the path of yoga.

Yoga means union. You can practise hatha yoga; you can practise meditation and other forms of yoga. They will help you, there is no doubt about it. But the most important thing is, do you know how to move inwardly? Do you know how to direct consciousness to go deep into yourself, yourself which is infinite, which knows no end? And what is the form? How are you going to dive deep within yourself? And if you walk on the path, which way will you go? This is a very important question and everybody has to answer it. How do you go within yourself?

Through the various practices of yoga, we can find the way within ourselves and thereby accelerate the pace of spiritual evolution – inner evolution. And this inner evolution will ultimately bring us closer to the whole of humanity, the whole of creation, to all the universe. This is the path which was instructed by Krishna to Arjuna.

Arjuna was confounded; he was not clear what he should do. He was the chief of an army, but he thought that he had to renounce those duties, obligations and so forth. Krishna instructed him that he had to live and he had to work, but side by side he had to enlarge the scope of his awareness. In order to enlarge the scope of his awareness, he had to practise the various ways of yoga: dhyana yoga (the path of meditation), raja yoga, bhakti yoga, and many others.

This was a short introduction to the path of yoga. In our day-to-day life, we can integrate a few practices according to our nature and inclinations. Then later, when we develop our awareness, we can go ahead with other yoga practices.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In our attempt to integrate yoga into our daily lives, what do you see as the area of most difficulty that Americans have?

It is not only Americans. I think that most people today don't know how to integrate yoga into their daily lives. Sometimes when they want to integrate yoga into their life, they treat it so simply that the effect becomes like a religion, and sometimes they go so far that it becomes like occultism and mysticism. Sometimes they take yoga so far that it becomes a therapeutic science or a medical science. They lose the spirit of yoga. So, first of all, we have to understand what the spirit of yoga is in relation to man's obligations to life and karma.

Can you explain what you mean by raja yoga?

Raja yoga is the name of that yoga which was expounded by Sage Patanjali. His writings are known as the *Yoga Sutras*. He has classified raja yoga into eight steps: (i) *yama*, self-control; (ii) *niyama*, observances and regulations; (iii) *asana*, postures, (iv) *pranayama*, breathing practices; (v) *pratyahara*, withdrawal of the awareness from the sense objects; (vi) *dharana*, concentration; (vii) *dhyana*, meditation; (viii) *samadhi*, total transcendence. These are the eight steps known as raja yoga.

What is the origin of physical diseases and psychological diseases, and is there such a thing as spiritual disease?

There are three sources of disease. One is from your karma, the *samskaras*, the impressions, which you have inherited. Another is mental, from your way of thinking, your mental, emotional relationship with yourself and with what happens to you. The third is physical, within the physical organism: hormones, endocrines, mechanical defects of the organs.

What do I mean by karma? Either in our past life or in the life of our parents, desires, ambitions, attachments, accomplishments, frustrations and everything, are piled up in the form of archetypes. It does not only happen in human beings; it also happens in nature. Suppose we fought with each other ten years ago, and you left for some country and I left for another. When we meet after ten years, can you remember it or not? Yes. How can you remember after ten years?

There is a file inside, where everything is recorded. Then, when I see you and you see me, the information suddenly comes up. In the beginning, it is like a tape recording, exact at first, then in the course of time, the impression is reduced to a formless state in the subtle body, which is called *samskara* or archetype.

There are millions and millions of archetypes in our brain which we have inherited from our parents and from our past lives too (for those who believe in it). Every day, we are also getting a lot of *karmas* and *samskaras* from the environment as well. You fight with someone, you love somebody, you like someone, you dislike someone – attachment, frustrations, desires, they are all recorded and retained. It is easy to see how these *karmas* can influence the mental structure.

For the physical diseases you have *hatha yoga*, and for the mental illnesses you have *raja yoga*. For the spiritual diseases you have to go into the analysis of the truth behind everything, not only the truth behind God, but the truth behind many things in creation. What is life? Why was I born? Who am I? What is my relation to him or her? What is my relation to time and space? Am I different from everybody, or am I a part of the whole universe? There are some knotty questions, which you will have to discuss within yourself to treat the spiritual disease.

What is *avidya*? What is ignorance? Imagine that you are moving at night in a village in Africa, or on the Amazon. It is total darkness and suddenly you feel some long thing touch your ankle. You think, “It is a snake!” You are frightened, but suddenly someone turns on the torch and you see that

it is only a rope. That was an example of *avidya*, ignorance. You superimpose your unconscious fears onto the rope, but you realize it only when you get the light. You superimposed your own fears onto the rope. You superimposed your own attachments also. If you can superimpose your fears onto some object, you can superimpose something onto me too, can't you? You can think I'm your enemy. You can superimpose your neurosis on something. That is called *avidya*, absence of true awareness.

According to Indian philosophy, when you consider this body to be the ultimate matter and real experience, and you reject, ignore or bypass the spiritual light in you, that is *avidya*. When you accept the inner awareness to be the truth, and final, and this body not, that is *vidya*. That is the treatment of spiritual disease.



8

Satsang

At the residence of Surendra Sharma, Washington, DC, 29 August 1982.

Yesterday, you mentioned Christ and how he displayed his powers. Was there a purpose for him to do this? If so, what was it? Also, what is our relationship with him?

Saints, savants, prophets and godmen do not belong to any nation or any religion. They are above cult and denomination, and do not propound a sect. They just speak the truth. Historically, Jesus came in order to lead mankind, let us say, to a higher concept of reality and to guide them through a path which was more spiritual and internal than ritualistic. He found that the people with whom he lived did not understand the spirit of inner life. Their practices were only based on external rituals in the name of God.

He saw that they did believe in God, but that they did not practise the faith in reality. He wanted to tell his people that they should open the inner life rather than practise external rituals. He did not succeed in that, but later, when he started convincing people by using his extraordinary and supernatural powers, thousands used to go to him for guidance, healing and many other blessings.

However, when the masses follow a great spiritual master, the political thinkers in any country become a bit apprehensive; they did then, and they do today. So you know

what they did. It was not only the political thinkers who persecuted him, but also the religious people. They thought that the true statements of Christ, about God, about sadhana and about spiritual life were a hindrance to their religious profession (let us use the word). The priests did not like it, so the whole episode happened, as we all know.

In the ancient Hindu books, the Puranas, they talk about the incarnation of the Supreme Being. In many Puranas they talk about various incarnations of the Divine, who come upon this earth, from time to time, in order to uphold the virtues, destroy the viciousness and lead the sincere to the spiritual path. These incarnations are many and they manifest from time to time. In that category, Buddha and Christ are both considered avatars. The stories of avatars are usually very similar, and as you have in the Bible, the story of Moses, the story of Christ, they are more or less the same as those indicated in the Puranas.

So for us, Jesus was a messenger of God, the voice of God and incarnation of the Supreme Divinity. You may call him son of God; it doesn't matter which title you use. He was a part of the Supreme Being, either in totality, or in part, and we have to try to accept both. If you say that Christ was total God incarnate, we will say yes, or if you say he was a part of God, His son, we will also agree. He himself used both of these concepts. In one place he says, "Father in heaven", which indicates duality. Then in another place he says, "Thy kingdom come", which means here. Finally, he says, "I and my Father are one", which means total unity.

These three concepts are systematically worked out by Indian philosophy. The first, 'Father in heaven', is duality, which means I am the devotee and He is God. I am not He and He is not me. I am His spark; I am His devotee and I pray for His blessings, and he gives me His grace. I always remain a devotee; He always remains God, and that is our relationship. We never become one. That is the philosophy of Hindus called bhakti yoga.

In bhakti yoga, God and the devotee are two and not one. The bhakta doesn't want to become one with God. He

says, “If I become one with God, there will be no fun in it, because the bliss that I can get is when I am separate from God, so that I can love Him.” If you merge yourself with the object you love, then you lose the fun of love, the bliss of love. So a devotee always wants to remain separate and wants to pine for God, wants to love God, wants to dedicate himself to God. In that he finds trance, bliss, *ananda*. That is one concept. We call it bhakti yoga, *dwaitism*, or dualistic philosophy.

‘Thy kingdom come’ means that God is there, but He can also descend and become the indweller within our hearts. That means that we are not part of Him, but a spark. That is another school of philosophy. The third school of philosophy is Vedanta, where God and the individual soul, though they appear as two different entities, are essentially one, just like the sun and its reflection in water. Appearance is duality, but in reality it is one – ‘I and my Father are one’, which means that we are one and the same.

So, we accept the status of any incarnation or avatar (one who has descended) in any category. If you consider Christ as a devotee of God, we say it’s alright. If you consider him as a spark of Divinity, as the son, we say alright. If you consider that he and God are the same, not different (Christ is God and God is Christ), that’s perfectly alright.

There is a beautiful story in the *Ramayana*, where there are two characters: one is Rama and one is Hanuman, the monkey god. Rama is considered the seventh incarnation of God, according to Hindu chronology, the seventh avatar. Just as Christ is considered an avatar, Rama is considered the seventh avatar, and Buddha is considered the ninth avatar. Hanuman was the greatest devotee and servant of Rama, and he served Rama with total loyalty and utmost devotion, even at the cost of his own life. There are tales and tales of his devoted services to Rama.

Once Rama happened to ask, “Hanuman, what is our relationship?” Hanuman said, “When I identify myself with the body, this gross, mundane perception, I’m your

servant and you're my master. But when I identify with the consciousness, then I am a part of your being."

Just as the light is the part of the bulb, they are not different and yet they are different; the sun and the sun's rays are also different and not different. When I identify myself with the Supreme Spirit that is in me, we are one. From the gross point of view, I am the servant and You are the master. From the consciousness point of view, I'm Your expression, and from the spiritual point of view, You and I are not different.

This should be the status of Christ. Everybody, no matter whether they are Christians, Jews or Muslims, must consider Christ according to their own inner possibilities; then you are the devotee and Christ is your lord. When you are soaked in spiritual awareness deep down, then you are the Christ at that level. Christ is not the church; Christ is not Christianity; Christ is consciousness.

Therefore, Christ, to spiritual people like me, should mean samadhi consciousness. When you enter into samadhi, the highest spiritual state, when you transcend the body, the name, the form, the mind, time, space, etc., and you go deep into the realm of bliss, and you experience total unity with the whole universe, that should be known as 'Christ consciousness'.

Now, why did he come? I have a story about it, and I'm talking about information obtained from the authentic scrolls discovered near the Dead Sea, and read in Western Germany. Fifty years before the birth of Jesus, there was an ashram, a monastery, near his birthplace, but the monks left that place. Then, four or five years before his birth, the monastery was re-established and rehabilitated by a sect called the Essenes, who seem to me to have been sannyasins. Jesus used to go there, and he was very impressive.

The head of the monastery took a liking to him, finding that he was very intuitive, very great and very special, not like an ordinary human being. Because of this, they thought it was not proper for them to keep him in that monastery,

which was merely ruled by priests and administrators. They decided that some spiritually illumined person should give him training, so they sent him to India.

Throughout the history of the world, India has been the place where real spiritual knowledge could be developed by a person. By this, I don't mean ordinary, factual knowledge, but the knowledge that comes from spiritual experience, from inner awareness. At that time in India, the most important places of spiritual experience were Nalanda, Kashmir, Nepal and Jagannath Puri. Jesus went to all these places. He went to Kashmir, which was the seat of the Shaivite doctrine (Shaivasiddhanta philosophy). He went to Nepal, which was the seat of the orthodox Hindu religion. He went to Puri, and finally he settled in Nalanda, which was the seat of Hinayana Buddhism.

Buddhism has two branches: Hinayana Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. The word *hinayana* in Sanskrit literally translates into 'lesser vehicle' or 'narrow way', while *mahayana* means 'greater vehicle' or the 'broad way'. Hence, Hinayana Buddhism was a monastic system meant for swamis like us, while Mahayana Buddhism was for householders who were married and had children. Jesus also lived at Nalanda for a number of years. Later, he went to every part of India, and had interviews, encounters, conversations and spiritual relationships with most of the great people of that time.

However, when Jesus returned to his own country, he found it difficult to adjust what he had experienced in India to that atmosphere. He was teaching the people a theme that was not only for healing their worldly sickness, but also for their spiritual elevation. He was teaching both at the same time – if they are sick, make them alright; if they are rejected by society, accept them. But at the same time, he was trying to teach them a spiritual philosophy which the people did not like.

Many of the tribes of Israel had migrated to Kashmir, which accounts for the fact that many names of towns, cities, etc., in Kashmir and Israel are the same. After Jesus left Palestine, realizing the differences, he went to Kashmir

where he subsequently died. Even today in Srinagar, there is a tomb known as Nabi Isu. He was known as Nabi or Isu, which means 'the collector' (like collecting sheep), and that is where he is buried.

The references to this incident can be found in the Muslim books called Hadis, which are supplementary to the Koran. In these books, there is a reference to how and where the son of Mary, the prophet, the Nabi, was buried. It says, "So we buried Isu Nabi, the son of Mary, in the land of hills and dales, rivers and pastures." Israel has no answer to this scenery. The person in charge of that tomb now is a Muslim, and he keeps the scrolls. Americans, Germans, and French people have gone there in order to get the scrolls from him, but somehow he is not prepared to give them. No dollars can get them from him. If dollars can purchase them later, they can come out and we can read them, or maybe they would be suppressed – anything can happen.

The life of a saint should be an open book: whether he drank wine or poison; whether he practised his spirituality, or he practised samadhi, or he was crucified; whether he went to India or Japan; whether he married or did not marry; whether he wore a coat, pants or a hat; whether he smoked or took hashish. The life of a saint must be open so that other people can follow the truth from him. We should not conceal the life of a saint just to protect our religious beliefs and prejudices.

Our religious beliefs are that a person like me should not marry, right? Should not have any interaction with a woman, should not drink wine, should not eat meat. This is the general social concept. But suppose I do it? I may still be a person of inner achievement. This has to be kept open to the people. You should not conceal that part of my life which is not suitable to your cult and tradition. That is the mistake everybody is making.

Now, coming to the miracles, the life of Jesus Christ was not only the life of a magician. When you attain the higher state of mind, the higher frequency, miracles automatically

take place, so that what you consider to be a miracle is natural for him. They are only miracles because we cannot do them, and we do not see them happen every day. Jesus was not made of the stuff that we are born of. Remember that he was immaculate, which means that he was not born of the union between sperm and ovum.

In India, we can accept this because we have many such personalities in our Hindu history, where persons were born without any interaction between the two poles of energy, the man and the woman. Because he was immaculate, he was not made up of physical particles, but must have been composed of light particles converted into matter, light converted into matter. Energy and matter are interconvertible.

As Christ's body was not a physical body made up of or composed of physical elements, I think that what he was doing was just natural to him. For us they were miracles, but for him they were just a natural expression of his spiritual mind and spiritual body, spiritual will or spiritual sankalpa.

Vedantins chant *Soham*, 'I am God'. In what respect is this so?

You see, just as Christians have the Bible, and Muslims have the Koran, and Zoroastrians have the book Zend Avesta, Hindus have many books, the most ancient being the Vedas. The word *veda* means 'knowledge'. There are four books, the most ancient of which is the *Rig Veda*, then the *Yajur Veda*, then the *Sama Veda*, then the *Atharva Veda*. These books were not written by one person. The hymns were composed by many seers, and collected.

In these Vedas, you can find every philosophy such as Vedanta philosophy, where He and I are one, or I am He and He is I. At the same time, the seed of dualistic philosophy is also in the Vedas. What you find in bhakti yoga, what you find in jnana yoga and Vedanta, and what you find in raja yoga is all in the Vedas. The Vedas are open to every philosophical idea.

Soham is in the Vedas, I agree, but there is not only that, because the Hindu way of thinking does not believe that

everybody has only one way. You may study in fifth grade, but why should I study in fifth grade? I'm a college student so I go to college, but if I go to college, why should she go to college? You study art or science or commerce. In the same way, according to their evolution, all people have different ways for reaching spiritual awareness.

Some people like to worship God as a personal God; some people don't like that. I may not like to worship God like a man; for me God may be consciousness. Some people believe that God is everywhere. This is how it is in the Vedas. They have expounded and expanded every possible way and, therefore, the Hindu way of spiritual life is not that simple. There are people who believe that truth is here. There are people who believe that God is in heaven and looking after our welfare. If you think that *Soham* is your sadhana, then continue that, but if you want to worship God in the form of an idol, that philosophy is in the Vedas too.

In this culture here, we believe that there is only one God, so what is the Hindu opinion, and is it the same as yoga?

We are not talking about yoga now. Hindus believe God is one, but that everybody sees him differently and cannot see him in the same way. I see my mother as my mother, but I can't ask my father to see my mother as his mother. The lady is one, but for me she is a mother; for her mother she is a daughter; for her husband she is a wife. God is one, but according to the liking of the devotee, God assumes any form in the heart of a person.

Hindu philosophy says that God has no form, no name, no area, no weight, no dimension, no place. But for the sake of the devotee, in order to consume his emotions, in order to accept his real love for Him, He assumes a form in his heart. It is true that anything that is subtle has no form of its own, but according to the medium, it appears to have a form. For example, what is the form of electricity? Is the light from a light bulb a form of electricity? No, but it is one of the expressions of electricity. Heat is another, but the electricity

itself has no form. In the same way, God has no form, but you can worship Him in any form you like.

There is always a lot of talk about it in India. Not just for the last few years, but for the last twenty thousand, thirty thousand, fifty thousand years, the Indians have always been talking on one subject – does God have a form, or is He formless. And if He is formless, what are the forms? And if these are His forms, then how is He formless? In every book, this is the discussion: is God with attribute or without attribute? Is He conditioned or unconditioned? Is He immanent or is He transcendental? Immanent here means in everything, just as electricity is in all the cables. If you say that God is transcendental, then what is the definition of creation? What are the sun and the moon and the stars? And if you say that God is immanent, that this universe, this creation is God, then what is the speciality of God?

These discussions have been held in India for thousands of years, in the Vedas, later in the Upanishads (dialogues between guru and disciple), later in the Puranas (mythologies), and even today. But now there is general agreement on one point. The saints, sages and swamis come from time to time and say, “Hey, why do you talk about God so much? You are like blind people discussing the sunlight. There somebody says he’s red; here somebody says he’s blue; there somebody says he is black. First, please have the eyes to see, then let us discuss it.”

Seven blind people, sent by their guru, went to an elephant. When they came back, he said, “How was the elephant?” One who had felt the legs said, “Like the trunk of a tree.” Another one said, “Like a whip.” (He must have caught the tail.) Another, who felt the trunk, said “Like a big, fat snake.” Another said, “Like a thick spear.” (He had felt the tusk.) So the seven blind people touched different parts of the same elephant and gave seven different definitions. The guru said, “Look here, none of these is an elephant, but a combination of these is an elephant.” However, they still didn’t know because they had never known, seen and experienced an elephant.

Our spiritual insight, our spiritual eyes, are in the dark and we are blind, so how can we see with them? First, open your heart, and with an open heart you can see the reality about God. Take, for instance, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda's guru. He was considered to be a madman. He was the priest in the temple of Kali in Calcutta, and while he was worshipping Kali, and doing the fire ceremony, he sometimes used to worship himself. And while he was offering prasad, he used to eat it himself.

This complaint was brought to the attention of the elders of the temple. They said, "He is violating all the principles of worship. He eats the prasad himself; he offers the flowers to himself." But the lady who had built the temple knew how advanced Ramakrishna really was, and that he considered Kali as God and his mother. People used to think he had gone insane. They used to say to him, "God has no name, no form. How can you say that this ugly lady, Kali, is God? God is infinite." He would reply, "No, God is not infinite. God is like my mother. She is so close to me, I can love her, I can talk to her."

He used to say these funny things. One day, a great swami, Totapuri, of my order, who was a staunch devotee of Vedanta, came to teach Ramakrishna a lesson. He said, "Ramkrishna, close your eyes." Ramakrishna, who was a very humble man, did as Totapuri asked. He closed his eyes. "Now, look within yourself," said Totapuri. "God has no form . . . no form." But Ramakrishna screamed. He said, "I see only Kali; I can't see a formless God." That swami worked on him for one hour, but he failed. Finally, Totapuri became angry. He had a small crystal ball with him, and he threw it at Ramakrishna. At that moment, Ramakrishna suddenly cried, "Ma!" and went into a trance.

You see, it is not the philosophical concept of God that is important. It is the opening of your heart that is important. Once the heart is opened, everything becomes clear. Whether God has a form or no form, whether God is a man or a woman, whether he is an American or Indian, everything becomes

clear at that time. And the moment you have awareness of God, you lose external consciousness.

When you put rubbish on the fire, the fire consumes the whole thing; it doesn't retain it. In the same way, when *bhakti*, inner devotion, flows out from your heart, worldly awareness will not be there. You will forget you are a lady, an American, or South American, or Indian or you're forty-five years old, or fifty-five years old. You'll forget everything. For that moment, the consciousness is completely consumed, just as the rubbish is consumed by the fire.

Sometimes, during concentration, so many undreamt of thoughts enter the consciousness. How is it so?

Concentration is like a laxative. Light concentration is like a laxative, and strong practices of concentration are like purgatives. You take a laxative and it comes out; when you take a purgative, it comes out forcefully. When you concentrate, all the *samskaras*, all the impressions, all the latent impressions in your mind for years and years together come out from the depths of your mind to the upper surface. You can see them clearly, sometimes you can see them symbolically. Whatever you see is within you. It is a process of purging, and it is only when you repeat your mantra that those thoughts come. If you are eating, drinking, walking, talking or driving, nothing will come to your mind. But take the mala in your hand and immediately the purging begins. When you practise your mantra, you are looking into yourself, and when you look into yourself, you see what is there.

In the beginning, if you practise hard and intense concentration, the thought forces are too powerful, so we do not teach intense concentration to people unless we are sure they have restructured their lifestyle and mind. If I know that you are a man with a lot of attachments, confusions, and mental and emotional complications, I will never give you intense spiritual practices. If I did, you would see all those mental conflicts naked, and you would have problems. You would say, "My God, what is all this that's happening?"

So we give you a mild dose, so that little by little you go on purging. That is precisely the reason why the intense practices of pranayama are not taught openly.



9

Inner Awakening

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 31 August 1982.

It is proved beyond doubt that meditation is not merely a mystical exercise or a branch of occultism. Scientific evidence, of which there has been plenty in the past three decades from Indian and Western scientists, proves that the regular practise of meditation affects not only the consciousness, but also the mind and the body.

What is meditation?

Meditation is a difficult task. Merely closing the eyes and withdrawing the consciousness from the objective realm of experience does not constitute meditation. The ancient term for meditation is *dhyana*, which means, 'total awareness', not partial awareness, not diminished awareness, not hypnotic awareness, but total awareness. Dreams, for instance, do not represent total awareness; they are partial. Neither do psychedelic experiences represent total awareness; they are only partial too.

When the difference between external perception and internal perception ceases to exist, that is *dhyana*. In the same way as you can see an object outside, you can see an object inside with the same quality of perception, and when you do, that is *dhyana*. I don't know whether the word meditation has the same meaning here. Therefore, I say that meditation is an uphill task.

Closing your eyes and withdrawing your mind from the senses and sense objects is preparation for meditation and not meditation itself. The glory and importance of meditation has already been judged and investigated in every possible manner in relation to body, mind and consciousness. The hundreds of books that have been written by religious, yogic and scientific authorities attest to this.

The ajapa way

Today it is in my mind to tell you one of the ways we can adopt for ourselves, which can successfully lead us to meditation. This method is a very ancient one. It was taught by Lord Buddha, and was also mentioned in the ancient Vedas and Upanishads. I am not going into the theoretical and scientific facts about meditation. The first important fact which will become clear to you all is that meditation is for everybody, in relation to their day-to-day life, for sickness of body, mind and inner spirit.

There are scientific manuals regularly published in this country, where the effects of meditation on the brainwaves, cardiovascular system, lungs, kidneys, oxygen consumption and other spheres of the physical body have been examined in detail. So it is not necessary to prove to you the utility of meditation in life, but it is necessary for me now to teach you one method.

There is not only one method of meditation, but many hundreds, which are chosen according to the temperament, the quality and the capacity of the individual. One method of meditation may suit you, but may not be suitable for another person. However, this particular practice has been experimented with for over three thousand years. We call it breath meditation. In the ancient books it is known as *ajapa japa*.

Japa means 'constant awareness' and *ajapa* means 'spontaneous'. Hence, *ajapa japa* means 'spontaneous awareness'. The spontaneity of awareness is to be maintained by developing awareness of the flow of the breath. You know that you breathe all the time, but you are not aware of it. You don't

try to breathe, but you do it naturally – that is spontaneity. In the same way, the awareness of breathing also has to become spontaneous.

You can concentrate on an object in the mind, but you cannot maintain spontaneity because in the majority of people the mind itself is not spontaneous; it has no regularity. Distraction is the nature of the mind; it breaks often so you cannot maintain spontaneity. However, the breath is spontaneous and continuous, even in the night, even under anaesthetic. So your consciousness of it can become spontaneous too.

The postures

The sitting posture is important. Every practitioner of meditation must perfect it. In the advanced stage, when you have been able to make the inner awareness efficient, when you are able to develop total awareness within you, then you can practise while lying down flat in shavasana, the yoga nidra posture. For a beginner, a sitting posture is very necessary.

There are three important postures indicated by the yogic texts. One is known as padmasana, the lotus posture. The second is siddhasana, the adept's posture. The third is sukhasana, the easy posture. Of these three, I suggest siddhasana. Press the perineum with the left heel, place the right heel on the left, pressing the lower abdominal viscera, and lock both groups of toes. This asana is very helpful because when you are in siddhasana, the flow of blood reverses from the perineum up towards the heart and the brain, as if you were pumping the blood and the energy to the higher centres of the body rather than the lower centres of body.

I won't go into details about siddhasana; please read in the books about the importance and positive benefits of this sitting posture. If siddhasana is not possible, you should practise padmasana, and in both of the postures you must assume a mudra. There are many mudras, but out of those I can give you two. The better one is called chin mudra, with the thumb and forefinger together. The other is a form of yoni mudra.

The practices

In the first stage of ajapa japa, you simply maintain continuous awareness of the spontaneous breath. You do not try to breathe in and out; you just casually become aware of the breathing. In the scheme of meditation, when you begin concentration, you should always be casual. Don't be strict with yourself. Do not strain your nerves. If your mind refuses to follow, give it a little chance.

In the next stage, find out the nature of the sound of the breath. The ingoing breath and the outgoing breath have sounds. What sound does the breathing make? The yoga books say that the sound of the breath is *Soham*. The sound *Soham*, which is heard within the sound of the breath, has a meaning in Sanskrit – 'I am That'. 'I', the individual consciousness, am 'That', the cosmic consciousness. An identity is therefore drawn between the individual consciousness and the cosmic consciousness, but here I do not mean to give the second meaning.

In the third stage of ajapa japa, you transfer the centre of breath awareness from the nostrils and imagine that it is moving up and down between the navel and the throat. Now, make the breath a little deeper than natural. While the consciousness of the breath moves up and down, you are creating a psychic passage, that is, a passage through which your psyche flows. A psychic passage can be created anywhere in the body.

So, in this practice you are creating a psychic passage between the navel and the throat. While you are breathing, each ingoing breath feels as if it is ascending from the navel to the throat and the outgoing breath is descending from the throat to the navel. At the same time, you practise awareness of the sound *So* with inhalation and *Ham* with exhalation.

Ujjayi pranayama

After you have practised the above technique for ten or fifteen minutes each morning for a month or so, learn how to perform ujjayi pranayama. This is done by contracting the

glottis a little bit, so that the breathing makes a fine hissing sound. At the same time, you should fold your tongue back in the mouth to touch the upper palate. This is called khechari mudra. You can relax the tongue occasionally, but you should perform khechari most of the time while doing ujjayi. When you have perfected these practices, you can change the psychic passage so that it is no longer between the navel and the throat, but through the spine.

Sushumna path

In tantra, we call the spinal passage ‘sushumna’. It is a channel through which the higher consciousness flows, and at its base is a centre called mooladhara chakra. Up along the length of sushumna are six chakras in all. Mooladhara is in the centre of the perineum; swadhisthana is in the centre of the sacrum; manipura is in the spine behind the navel; anahata is in the spine behind the heart; vishuddhi is in the spine at the lower neck, and ajna is at the top of the spine.

The chakras represent waves of energy, and sushumna is situated through and penetrates each of them, just as the thread goes through each bead in a rosary. It is this sushumna which is the basis of the psychic passage in ajapa japa with ujjayi breathing.

When you breathe in, in ujjayi, you must feel that your breath flows up through sushumna in the spine from mooladhara chakra to ajna chakra. Then, when breathing out, you feel that the breath is flowing down from ajna to mooladhara. As you continue to breathe in and out, up and down, you can hear the hiss of the ujjayi breath moving through sushumna and piercing the chakras. It is not necessary to be particularly aware of the chakras, but you should definitely be aware of the passage. This is the basic technique, and after several months of regular practice, it can develop into the following further practices.

Practice 1: Be seated in padmasana or siddhasana. Close your eyes. Check, make sure your spine is straight. Then

practise normal breathing and awareness for a while. Become aware of mooladhara chakra and then follow the ujjayi inhalation up the sushumna to ajna. From ajna descend with exhalation, making the sound *Ommmm* . . . to mooladhara. Practise ten rounds or so, depending on time available.

Practice 2: Inhale up from mooladhara to ajna with ujjayi and khechari, then exhale back down sushumna. Do this 30, 40 or 50 times.

Practice 3: Go to mooladhara. Breathe up the spine with ujjayi and khechari, hearing the sound *So* all the way up to ajna. Then on exhalation hear the sound *Ham* all the way down to mooladhara.

Practice 4: Concentrate on the mid-eyebrow centre. Some people, when they close their eyes and concentrate there, can see a tiny star. Some see different colours. However, if you have difficulty concentrating at that point, put a spot of saliva there so that you can feel it. If you prefer, you can put a spot of sandalwood paste or red paste on the eyebrow centre. They do this in the Hindu religion, and it originated as a concentration practice.

The third way to concentrate on the mid-eyebrow centre is to keep the eyes open and look up to that point, a practice called shambhavi mudra. There is a fourth way to awaken awareness of the mid-eyebrow centre. It is called trataka. In this practice one stares at a black dot or a candle flame for half a minute or so, then one closes the eyes and looks at the mid-eyebrow centre. The centre becomes very clear; you can see either a light spot or a black spot. Whatever you see, you go on concentrating on that point.

Mental observation

Now, what should your attitude be to the distraction and wanderings of the mind during meditation? Some thinkers say you should control your thoughts there and then. Others say no, give the thoughts a long rope. In my opinion, sometimes

you should give a long rope to the mind and sometimes you should tighten the screws.

As far as I can understand, you cannot handle the mind by controlling it, nor can you handle it by letting it run loose. You have to be very cautious in handling the mind because it is not another substance; it is you. The distracted mind is you and the mind that is trying to control it is you. If you try to tighten the mind, you are creating a split. But if you give the mind a long rope and let it do as it likes, there is no end to that.

In the practice of ajapa japa, it is said that if your mind is wandering, just watch it, do nothing with it, just observe it. And if your mind is getting unified, continue to watch it. In both these events you have to watch your mind. If your mind is getting unified, if it is about to be concentrated and you don't want it, you slip into the process – you get visions, drowsiness and jerks. On the other hand, if you allow the mind a long rope and do not observe it, then there is no end to it. You have to watch it. Lord Buddha named this sadhana *vipassana* which means 'to see the mind'.

So, while you are doing the sadhana of breath consciousness, *Soham* consciousness, sushumna consciousness, eyebrow consciousness, light spot consciousness, you have to be ever watchful of the distractions of the mind. After ajapa japa is perfected, in a year or two, depending on your regularity and sincerity, you should learn kriya yoga, the group of practices in which you make the inner consciousness totally dynamic.

Inner awakening

For all seekers and aspirants of inner life, let me tell you this. Inner awareness is not a diminished quality of awareness; it is not dreaming; it is not hallucination; it is not even a vision that flashes across your mind; it is not just awareness of an object which you know is not there. In true awareness there is minimal change in the quality of awareness, because it is the same consciousness which is operating on the outside, here at this moment. There is no difference; there is no curtailment.

It is the same awareness by which you are seeing me and I am seeing you right now, by which you recognize me and I recognize you. It is also the same awareness by which you are conscious of time, space and objects – the same awareness, but introverted.

When you are inside you are as aware as you are here. The inner experience is as effulgent, as true and as absolute as the experience here. The only difference is that with that external awareness, I am aware of objects which are perishable and finite, whereas with the inner awareness, I am conscious of something which is imperishable, infinite and total.

Do not make a mistake here. Many scholars have compared this state with sleep. They say in sleep there is not awareness and in samadhi there is not awareness, but in sleep there is no knowledge while in samadhi there is total knowledge. They are wrong in that the inner state is to be compared with the state of waking. Here you are aware of objects, time and space, whereas in the inner consciousness you are not aware of time, space and objects, but you are clearly aware of the self, the *atman*.

Whatever the self is – it may be bliss, it may be light, it may be the universe, it may be darkness, it may be a ghost, it could be the sun or the moon – whatever you perceive there, you perceive it as real as you are perceiving the objects in this room. Therefore, do not try to diminish the quality of your awareness by misunderstanding and thinking that in meditation the mind becomes less and less active.

It is said in all the yoga books that inner awareness is total wakefulness. There is a verse in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* about it. It is total daylight, and if at any time you are practising meditation, ajapa japa, or kriya yoga, and the experiences which come to you look like dreams, reject them as hypnotic experiences.

To illustrate this, I can give you an example of an experience from my own life. In 1963, on July 14th, at 3 to 4 am, I had been sleeping in my bed in Munger. Suddenly, I woke up internally, and had the total feeling that I was in Rishikesh, the place where my guru lived. I was standing on

the right bank of the river Ganges and a steam launch was crossing to the other side. My guru, Swami Sivananda, was seated in the rear of the launch. Trumpets and conches were being blown and bells were ringing.

Then, for a moment, Swami Sivananda turned around and looked at me, and at the same time the propeller of the launch splashed water on my body. That was the end of that inner awakening, but when I got up from my bed, the experience had been so real that I still did not know whether I was in Rishikesh or Munger. When I looked around I thought, “What is this. Am I dreaming?” I thought that Rishikesh had been the real experience and now I was dreaming of Munger.

That is the inner awakening. If you see your ishta devata, your deity – Rama, Krishna, Christ, Guru – that has to be the reality of your realization, your personal vision of that person – real flesh and blood. For this, you must try to maintain the totality of your awareness, no matter how difficult that is. Please do not allow your awareness to be diminished in the name of relaxation. In these days, in your country, in my country, all throughout the world, people have been trying to practise meditation by relaxing, and they are thereby erasing, bit by bit, the totality of mental awareness.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Swamiji, you speak very well. Is that because of yoga?

Yoga helps you to think well, to feel well and to live well, so naturally you will speak well too. Swami Vivekananda was a great speaker and had a photographic memory, all because of yoga. In India, you see many yogis who display prodigious feats of memory, which they have developed as a result of their yoga practices.

Could you throw some light on the techniques of yoga for the modern life of ordinary people?

In modern life, people have less time and a little more distraction. They can practise a combination of hatha yoga

and raja yoga or, if they like, only hatha yoga. They can practise just that because it leads to perfect health of body and mind. If you don't like hatha yoga, and many people don't, you can practise meditation. In the yoga books it is clearly written that what you achieve by hatha yoga, you can achieve by meditation also, and vice versa. The rewards are the same, but a synthesis is better, a synthesis of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga, in the scheme of our sadhana, is most suitable for modern people.

At the beginning, is it necessary to have an actual guru to guide us in our practices?

If you want to learn hatha yoga, you must have a teacher, and if you want to go into the deeper aspects of hatha yoga, your teacher should be a guru. If he is not a guru, you must find one. In each and every yoga, there may be items which are not suitable for you because of your unique personality. When you have a guru, he knows you very well so he can suggest to you what you should practise.

Yoga should be practised according to one's temperament. Everybody does not belong to the same temperament. Some are dynamic; they don't want to do anything except karma yoga all the time. Some are emotional by temperament; they just want bhakti. Others are psychic by temperament; they just want to sit down and meditate – no karma yoga, just a little food and quiet. Some are rational by temperament; they go on analyzing and introspecting. That is jnana yoga. Maybe I don't want to practise anything; I want to analyze, to talk, to rationalize. Let me do it! Why do you ask me to practise bhakti yoga when I don't want it? There has to be a way for me too.

Hence, sadhana has to be given to the person according to his unique temperament. But if you are going to judge which temperament you have, you will find all four, whether mainly dynamic, emotional, psychic or rational. It is like a doctor with a patient. The doctor diagnoses the person's problems and prescribes the appropriate medicine. In the

same way, on the path of sadhana, it is very necessary to consult a person who knows about the science and about you.

After doing yoga postures and breathing, my body feels about thirty pounds lighter. Why is that?

When you practise yoga exercises, the various systems in the body, such as the respiratory, circulatory, cardiac and nervous systems, are properly activated. As a result of this, the feelings in the brain that had been blocked are released and the pranic energy is introduced into the higher centres of the brain, allowing you to feel light and relaxed.

When you are not practising yoga, the nervous system is slow, and as a result you always feel a sort of depression. Further, the energy which is available in the body usually remains blocked at one or more centres because the nervous system is not activated. By the practices of asanas and pranayama the nervous system is activated and the blocks are removed.

Is it essential to be a vegetarian to begin to practise yoga?

Well, this is a good question. I have always maintained in my mind the most ancient attitude of Hindus, the most orthodox attitude which was that there is no spiritual harm in eating meat, drinking alcohol and having sexual intercourse. This is the natural urge of living beings. But if you can refrain from them, or leave them, the reward will be greater. This is the statement made by Manu, the ancient lawgiver, and it is the attitude which I maintain.

A person can eat whatever diet he likes and start practising yoga, but in the course of time, when he develops his consciousness and purity in the body, if the non-vegetarian diet is still necessary, why should he not take it? Yoga is not against meat, because yoga is an offshoot of tantra and tantra includes the non-vegetarian diet as part of the spiritual ritual. So if this conflict is in anybody's mind, it should definitely be obliterated.

How frequently and for how long should one practise yoga?

In the yoga practices, it is the regularity which is of paramount importance. You may decide to practise thrice a week, say Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. That is alright, but it must be kept to that. Some people practise almost every day for one hour each time, but drop it after a few months – that is irregularity.

If you decide to practise ten minutes every day, do it every day. If you decide to practise every alternate day, do it that way. If you decide to practise in the night or in the morning, do that. It is the regularity which is far more important than the frequency, duration or time of day.

Is sirshasana part of yoga? What are its benefits?

Sirshasana is the headstand posture. It is one of the eighty-four major postures, and can be considered a part of hatha yoga, which is, a branch of yoga. Those who prepare themselves through proper practices and purify the body by preliminary exercises, yoga exercises, elementary pranayama and correcting the errors in diet can practise sirshasana, and it will do them immense good.

A lot of work has been done on sirshasana, which is considered the king of all asanas. In 1962, a team of doctors in Poland, under the leadership of Drs Pacek and Romanowski, conducted thorough and extensive research into the effects of sirshasana on the human body, brain, oxygen, respiration, blood pressure, everything. The results were all positive.

However, there is one important thing – sirshasana does need preparation. One's body may be pure, but the regulation is that one must do all the asanas to purify the various systems and pranayama to purify the nadis. The shatkriyas should also be done for internal purification.

In this way, the toxins which reside in the various spheres of the body are eliminated. Then you can practise sirshasana, starting with a few seconds, and according to your lifestyle, slowly increase to a few minutes. I have seen many aspirants, including doctors, lawyers, businessmen, householders

and children, who practise sirshasana for fifteen or twenty minutes each day. However, they practise under my guidance. Every month I adjust the amount they should do: October, November, December, January, February, increase the period; March, April, May, June, July, decrease the period; August, September, minimum.

Are there any harmful effects from sirshasana?

Things must be done systematically. The rules are:

1. Correct the digestive system.
2. Correct errors in diet.
3. Proper sleep, according to your age (six or eight hours or ten).
4. Proper rules of family life. There are no abstentions, but there has to be regularity.
5. The place where you practise is important. In a hot country you should only practise for a minute or so.
6. Age is important. If one is over fifty-five, I don't know if one should practise. I have known old people who have done sirshasana into their nineties, but they always had instructions from a guru.

Hatha yoga is said to be purificatory for our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, which are somehow related to the energy poles in our body, ida and pingala nadis. What is the connection?

In the West, hatha yoga means asanas and pranayamas. If you go to an asana class, they say, "I am practising hatha yoga." But technically speaking, hatha yoga comprises the sixfold purificatory practices, called the shatkarmas or shatkriyas: neti, related to the nasal passages; dhauti, related to the alimentary passage; basti, related to the excretory passage; nauli, related to the rectus abdomini; kapalbhati, related to the frontal brain; and trataka, related to the pineal gland. Then, after these come asana and pranayama, which are not a part of hatha yoga, but are parts of raja yoga, whose steps are: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi.

Now, where does hatha yoga fit into this? There is a *niyama* which is called *shaucha*, purification, and hatha yoga is a part of this. You should purify your body, but how do you do it? You purify the external body, the internal organs, the nadis, the blood, the humours. For this, hatha yoga is practised.

The most authentic text on hatha yoga is *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. It says *ha* represents the moon and *tha* represents the sun, so *hatha* means ‘union of the sun and moon’. Sun and moon represent the prana and mind, two forces in a person. Prana is life, and mind is consciousness. Through mind you have knowledge, and this mind controls the *jnanendriyas*. The prana controls the *karmendriyas*. Hence, the five *jnanendriyas* and the five *karmendriyas* are respectively controlled by the mind and the prana, which are symbolically represented by the word hatha.

The left nostril is considered to symbolize the moon, while the right nostril is considered to symbolize the sun, and they connect with *ida nadi* and *pingala nadi*. In our modern system, *ida* and *pingala* are known as the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems, respectively. The two nadis are connected with the two hemispheres of the brain. *Ida*, though it flows in the left, connects with the right hemisphere, and *pingala* flows through the right, but connects with the left hemisphere.

It has already been found that when the right nostril is flowing and the left is blocked, certain activities can be perceived in the left side of the brain. In the same way, when the right nostril is blocked and the left is flowing, activities can be perceived in the right side of the brain. It has also been found that the temperature of the breath in the right nostril is slightly higher than that in the left nostril. The sun is hot and the moon is cool.

The two nadis ‘*ha*’ and ‘*tha*’ (*ida* and *pingala*) flow within the framework of the spine, crisscrossing on alternate sides, passing through the six psychic centres to finally terminate at the top of the spinal axis. They are almost always working with imbalance. I will give you an example.

There is a rhythmical cycle of the breath which has been checked by hundreds of experiments. I have checked it for years together on different people, and confirmed that the alternation of the flows of air between the left and the right nostril is guided by the lunar cycle.

On the first day of the lunar cycle, at the time of sunrise, you will always find in a healthy person that the left nostril is flowing and the right is blocked and that continues, according to the scriptures, for an hour and twenty minutes, after which the right one starts to flow and the left becomes blocked. This is the program for the first three days of the lunar cycle. Then, on the fourth day, the right nostril is flowing at sunrise and continues to do so for an hour and twenty minutes. However, if an illness occurs, then this rhythm is reversed. People who are expert in this science can say, "Which nostril is flowing, left? No, this is the time for the right, so you are going to get sick."

The imbalance in the rhythm of the ida and pingala flows means disturbance in the natural order of the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems. If your autonomic nervous system is working properly, then this order we have just mentioned will follow. If, on account of shocks, fears, tragedies, physical exertion, overeating, undereating, excitement, stimulations, passions, etc., the rhythm of the autonomic nervous system is disturbed, then this *swara*, nostril flow, will also change.

Now, what happens when there is total balance of both nostril flows? This is the time when the sushumna nadi is said to be flowing. When the ida and pingala nadis are in total balance, there is perfect balance in the autonomic nervous system. This can be accomplished by the hatha yoga shat-karmas, by fifteen minutes of pranayama, or by meditation if it is very deep. If total concentration takes place, then the experiences which you have during this time of awakening sushumna are spiritual experiences.

10

Satsang

Hindu Society of Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1 September 1982.

Would you please explain to us what is meant by karma and karma yoga?

Those who have studied the *Bhagavad Gita* know that the four main paths of yoga are designed to help us to attain external happiness and inner experience. Some people emphasize one of the yogas, but the *Gita* and the Hindu culture as a whole emphasize the integration of the four of them in the life of a person. A human being is temperamentally complicated. He has many things in his makeup, and so according to his temperament one of the yogas is more suitable for him.

In order to purify the mind it is very necessary to practise karma yoga. Bhakti, raja and jnana yoga are important for our balanced development. But karma yoga should predominate because if the mind is not purified of the dross, if the samskaras are not properly resolved, then they obstruct the process of inner experience as well as mundane experience. With an impure mind you have a lot of mental problems, which arise from your interaction with day-to-day life and the people around you.

Further, the impurities and the problems arising from these problems hinder the mundane experience – you have a lot of money but you can't enjoy; you have everything, good education, artistic ability, good family, but still you are

unhappy, because your interaction with life in general is not organized in the light of karma yoga.

Karma is action through the mind and through the body, and everyone performs it. But karma yoga is something more than this. Why do you do karma? For some people it is to produce; for others it is for enjoyment, but for a karma yogi, the object of performing the karma is self-purification.

When you are involved in karma, you are giving expression to your inner vrittis, or samskaras. The *Gita* tells us in the second chapter that when we perform a karma, we produce a result, side by side, and that result is not always auspicious. Whichever karma you may perform in your daily life, family, society or nation, the result is simultaneously produced.

The result of a karma is not always auspicious, but not always inauspicious either. It is a mixture of both, and since this is so, our mind is always anticipating an inauspicious result. You may realize it consciously or you may not. For example, a child is born and you are happy, but at the same time another expectation is lurking in the mind, though you don't acknowledge it. "Maybe he will die. Will he grow up normally?" They are always there.

Whichever karma we take up in life and whichever result we obtain from it, a fear always follows. This is why the total human mind is always obsessed by an unconscious fear and the yogi psychologists have always known it. Often you do not know that in the depths of the mind fear is lurking, even though you say on the surface that nothing is going to happen. If you do not fear that it is going to happen, why do you go to the temples? Why do you go to the church? Why do you propitiate this deity or that tomb or that tree? Why do you have to save gas? Because the fear is there, and you have not analyzed yourself.

How do we get rid of this fear? What are the causes? The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali clearly tell us: *avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (egotism, the 'I' feeling), *raga* (liking pleasure), *dvesha* (dislike of pain) and *abhinivesha* (fear of losing everything). This is the chronological order of the process of mind that

follows the result that accrues from every karma. Even if you become a multimillionaire, a great scholar, a great artist, a commander-in-chief, or a personality beyond all challenges, still there is that.

Therefore, there has to be some sort of approach between the karma and the accruing result. In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that his main concern is to do, to accomplish, to act, but that the fruits of the actions should not concern him. That is karma yoga: to act, to accomplish, to work, to execute, but to renounce the results of the action.

This is a very peculiar philosophy related to one's everyday life. Sri Krishna makes it very clear in each and every chapter of the *Gita*. You may act through the mind, through the senses, through the body, through your buddhi, for your sake, for the sake of your community, for anyone, but whatever you do, you should have only one purpose: *atma shuddhi*, purification of the self. When you realize that the results of the karma are beyond you, and that if you concern yourself with the result, you become the sufferer, consciously as well as unconsciously, then purity of mind starts to dawn.

What is purity of mind? It is not ethical purity, some arbitrary standard of thought. I'm not talking about morality, or religion, or only thinking good about others. To get an idea of what mental purity is, let us first look at mental impurity. When you sit down, the mind is distracted; one thought is overshadowed by another thought; one thought is crossed by another. Sometimes there is so much confusion in the realm of the mind that if you are a sensitive person, you may go insane. You perceive so many thought currents passing through the mind, and each contradicts the other. The schizophrenic attitude of the mind, the neurotic attitude of the mind, the psychotic attitude of the mind can be found in each and everybody.

We have all been programmed by our society, whether we are Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Americans or Indians. We have all been structured, but you cannot structure the deeper mind. So, when you sit for meditation, everything can

be seen. When you face a disaster in life, everything explodes. Until then, you go to nightclubs, to the ballroom, to picnics, and everything seems to be very nice, but when the difficulty comes, it all blows up. Where did it all come from? The whole thing is triggered by the deep samskaras of the mind, and it is these that are the impurities of the mind.

Therefore, *atma shuddhi*, purity of self, means that the mind is free from the influence of the samskaras, of *prakriti*, (nature, the manifested universe). When the mind becomes pure, what happens? Then clarity comes. You clean the mirror, then you can see your face; if you don't clean the mirror, you can't.

In order to concentrate the mind, it is very important that through karma yoga purity of the mind has been attained for a householder as well as for a sannyasin. Householders are impelled to action by desires, by ambitions, by passions, and by the fever of acquisition of knowledge, wealth, property, etc. It is not until they convert that action into karma yoga that clarity, purity and concentration of mind will come.

What are the best preparations we should make before practising meditation?

First step: purification of the mind through karma yoga. Second step: removing the oscillations of the mind through bhakti yoga. Third step: start raja yoga.

Imagine that you have collected materials: doors, windows, latches, hinges, bricks, cement, mortar, everything, and now you start erecting a house. You can't build it unless you have selected the necessary materials. Without attaining *chitta shuddhi*, mental purity, and without controlling the oscillating tendencies of the mind, if you sit for dhyana yoga, what are you going to see? You know it very well. I don't have to tell any one of you.

You are going to face the rascal tendencies of the mind every time, and finally you will dump yourself into some practices, like many people in the western world taking recourse to hallucinogenic drugs because they do not know how to handle

the mind. The basic preparations are not there, but once they are, raja yoga will frame the mind into proper shape.

Therefore, while we do accept that meditation, dhyana yoga, is the highest path, leading to samadhi, moksha and perennial beatitude, it should also be remembered that the latest psychological researches on people who are directly involved in meditation have shown that many have become psychologically disturbed or gone insane.

It is something like this: you eat a lot of rich foods, then you are constipated. Someone comes and says to you, “Look here, today there is another party.” So you eat some more of the same kind of food and you will vomit everything out. In the same way, in meditation, the subconscious mind and the unconscious mind pour out accumulated impressions in the form of visions, and you can’t handle them. Then you become temperamental, introverted, unable to have total relationships with the external life.

I do not mean to say that you should not meditate, but at the same time you have to take care of the samskaras, which you are cultivating every moment of your life. This is why, in ashram life, there is a synthesis of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. Another important point is that man is not just the mind; he is a combination of head, heart and hands. If you just try to develop the head or inner awareness through meditation and ignore the emotions and the dynamism, then your progress will be lopsided.

Dhyana yoga has been clearly defined in Sage Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*. He says, *Dhyanam nirvishayam manah*, which means, “When you are in meditation, there is no sense stimulation”. There is no awareness, even of yourself. Even the slightest vibrations of ego are absent in dhyana yoga. For this, a lot of preparation is necessary.

11

Yoga: A Means of Concentration

The residence of Manu Rawal, Denver, Colorado, 2 September 1982.

During the last three decades, western countries have evinced great interest in yoga, especially in the wake of the modern civilization leading to hypertension, stress and strain. In the beginning they were a bit sceptical because they thought that it was a form of religion and they didn't want their religion interfered with.

However, more recently, the scientists have conducted extensive research on the effects of various aspects of yoga on the body, mind and consciousness in this country, as well as in France, Sweden, Poland, Russia, Japan, Australia and, of course, India. Principally, they discovered that through practices such as asana, pranayama and meditation, you can cope with stress and strain, hypertension and other illnesses, which modern techniques of medicine are unable to alleviate. So, nowadays, many countries are utilizing yoga practices in the form of yoga therapy for the body and mind.

The four main branches

What is yoga? In India thousands of years ago, when the civilization reached a climax point as you have in the West today, Indians began to feel the need to develop a science which could meet their demands at that time. Where

there is wealth there are problems, consequently when a civilization progresses materially, the mind, emotions and man's philosophy about life are polluted and corrupted. This happens everywhere.

So in India they developed this science and discovered the four types of yoga: karma yoga for people with a predominantly dynamic temperament, bhakti yoga for emotional people, raja yoga for psychic people and jnana yoga for rational people. Apart from these, they also discovered kundalini yoga, mantra yoga, kriya yoga, laya yoga and others in order to develop the quality of mind and the quality of consciousness.

Back in that time, a great rishi known as Sage Patanjali formulated the science of raja yoga. Another rishi known as Vyasa formulated the philosophy of karma yoga in the form of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Two others known as Narada and Shandilya formulated the science of bhakti yoga, and Rishi Vyasa also formulated the science of jnana yoga. To this day, these remain the four main branches of yoga.

Yoga and religion

What can yoga offer to the whole of humanity? Firstly, yoga helps one to evolve on the inner plane; it helps you to transform the quality of your mind, and it is the quality of the mind which is important. If you have a low quality of mind, your reactions to life around you are very primitive and gross, but when your mind improves its quality, then your reactions to the events of life are naturally spontaneous, balanced and appropriate.

Secondly, most people in the world are religious. They are Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, etc. However, though they practise their religion, it does not influence the quality of their mind. I'm not criticizing; I am just citing facts. For the vast majority of religious practitioners, the ceremonies are just external. You go to church, synagogue or temple; you prostrate yourself before your deity; you observe many rituals, but what change does it make?

I don't expect it to change your whole personality, that is very difficult, but at least it should change the quality of

your reactions to the events of life. It doesn't do that. On the contrary, for example, most religions of the world have been responsible for intolerance and even for genocide, so we cannot believe that the religions have improved the quality of humanity.

Why has this come about? Because religions have moved without yoga. When a religion is just a religion, it is extrovert, but when a religion is combined and integrated with yoga, then it improves the quality of your inner awareness. This is a very simple hint that I am putting before all of you.

Concentration and kundalini

There is another problem. Nearly everyone has a religion, but they also have a distracted mind. You have been practising your religion for 30 or 40 years and now I ask you to concentrate on an object of your religion for a full minute without allowing a second thought. Can you do it? You can't because religion does not have a technique to teach you. It is just a belief, and you go by belief.

The mind needs concentration. It needs to be able to concentrate on one point. If you can avoid the diversification of awareness, if you unify your awareness around one point for a full minute, there will be a great explosion within the body. I'm not talking about the mind now. One minute, sixty seconds only, of total concentration, of unification of all the forces of mind around one object immediately sends energy waves shooting to the bottom of the spine, and the bottom of the spine is the seat of kundalini.

Kundalini is a tremendous power, a tremendous potential in man which we have not yet tapped. Apart from a few scientists, artists, musicians, yogis and maybe a few criminals, humanity has not started to use it. That potential, according to yoga, remains dormant at the base of the spine as *kundalini shakti*, the creative energy, which when awakened will activate the nine-tenths of the brain that is not being used.

You know that in the average person only one-tenth of the potential of the brain has evolved. Maybe in two or three

million years those other centres will evolve, but they are not active now. In a few people who are extraordinary many of these centres are evolved, but in most they lie dormant.

In order to achieve this evolution, which starts with concentration of the mind, religion alone is not enough. And even if a person does not have a religion, but still he is able to concentrate his mind, he can go ahead. A rank atheist, who does not accept the existence of a superior, divine or transcendental reality, if he is capable of holding his mind for a particular period of time, can awaken kundalini and produce creative intelligence in his life. There have been many scientists, artists and musicians, sadhus, sannyasins and yogis who belong to this group.

Yoga is a means to concentration, and the people who integrate the practices of yoga in their everyday life will certainly feel physically healthy, but at the same time they will do their religious worship and prayers with one-pointedness of mind. Usually that does not happen. When you sit for worship or devotional meditation or prayers, do you know what happens to you? You are split. One part of the mind is saying the prayers, but the other part is thinking about the work, the business, the love, the hatred, the tragedies, comedies, so many things.

If this split in the mind becomes broader and more complex, later on one may become schizophrenic. This is the reason that a large number of people with schizophrenia in the mental hospitals are those who were staunchly religious. That is why the scientists, the thinkers and the scholars have been telling us that religion is responsible for all manner of insanities. Is this true? No, you cannot blame religion. The problem is that you have excluded yoga from religion. Reintegrate yoga with your religious practices and it will transform the experience.

There are physical benefits, too, because when you concentrate the mind, changes take place in every part of the body. It is not only the heart, brain or blood pressure which change; every cell of the body receives the effect. That

is the conclusion of scientists today. Concentration of mind is the most important item in yoga. Yoga means union, and concentration is the union of the different currents of the mind. In the last thirty years we have witnessed the wonderful effects of meditation and other yoga practices.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can we overcome the suffering in our lives, especially the stress and tensions that we face today in the world?

I think I have, in a way, answered the question, but I'll try to expand upon it. I think that suffering is necessary for spiritual evolution, purification of mind and even for material progress. If one is trying to eradicate suffering, he is dreaming of something that is impossible. There is only one state which is considered beyond suffering, the *jivanmukta*, who has completely disidentified himself with his body, his mind and his surroundings.

I don't think that the four billion people in this world can ever do it. Maybe ten or twenty can, but most people will have to live a life of attachment to their minds, their bodies and their world, and this will inevitably bring suffering. Suffering is an experience, and experience is inherent in the mind. When you change the mind, then suffering changes its purpose and meaning.

Can you tell us how we can direct our mind during meditation and what meditation is?

Meditation is known as *dhyana* yoga. *Dhyana* means 'total awareness', it is the seventh step in *raja* yoga. It is not the first step. I know that most of us would like to learn meditation and practise it then and there, but according to *raja* yoga one doesn't practise meditation – meditation happens. It is the result of having prepared your body, your emotions and your mind.

You can't force your mind onto an object when your nervous system is disturbed, when your hormones are out

of balance, when your circulation is not good and when you have other physical disturbances and imbalances. Your experience is not merely dependent on the psychological stuff. Meditation is not merely dependent on the process of the mind. The body has its own role to play.

If there is too much adrenalin in your system, or too much thyroid hormone, or the gonads are secreting more sex hormones, or there is more or less cortisone, or if there is hyperacidity, or any of the other physiological imbalances, what is the use of trying to concentrate? These physiological aberrations will not allow the forces of consciousness to unify; they will break it. You cannot ignore those physiological principles, and that is why the yogis teach hatha yoga, asanas, pranayamas and dietary moderation.

Similarly, if your nervous system is disturbed, either by physical causes, by emotional causes or by your environment, you cannot meditate, even if you try to do so. Then, if you force it, you will have unpleasant experiences, such as hallucinations as you do with psychedelic drugs. Therefore, in order to practise dhyana yoga you need to have a systematic course, and you should not expect to perfect dhyana in a few months.

Becoming a dhyana yogi (reaching a point where you are completely aware inwardly, where you have inner awareness, self-awareness) is difficult. During thousands of years, we have been conditioned to maintain our awareness on the world around us, so that when we want to turn that awareness inward towards the self, we are trying to go against all that training. Remember this also. The inner awareness in dhyana is not diminished awareness. It is not hypnotic awareness. It is not suspension of awareness. It is exactly that awareness that you are experiencing now.

In dhyana yoga, in meditation, you should not interfere with the quality of awareness. Therefore, do not suppress the mind. Do not try to withdraw the mind, even from the sense objects. Follow any object on which the mind alights. Do not damage your awareness. Then there comes a moment when

objects vanish (not the awareness). You are not there, time is not there and space is not there. That is dhyana yoga. First, however, you must have prepared your body with hatha yoga, asanas, pranayamas, etc. You must have purified the mind of the effects of the samskaras by living a life of karma yoga, and you must have steadied the mind with bhakti yoga, especially mantra and kirtan.

What is the way of karma yoga, and what is its place in society?

Karma yoga purifies the mind and, in this way improves the quality of both your meditation and your behaviour. One doesn't reach the highest just by closing the eyes and trying to control the mind. If your mirror is not clean, it is no use polishing your face.

When you perform meditation practices, it is possible that you can go very deep and very high. You can even forget your body. However, there is a point through which your consciousness cannot penetrate, because you have arrived there without resolving and fixing your karmas, your desires, your ambitions, your passions, your tamasic nature, your attachments, etc.

If you practise karma yoga, then automatically, the karmas are resolved. But most of the time, people practise just karma. They just play with their desires, their ambitions and their passions. It doesn't matter what job you do or what your family is, you are just playing with the mind, with your samskaras. But you are not terminating them; you are adding to them more and more. However, through karma yoga you express your samskaras and exhaust them. What is karma yoga? Performing action where your ego is not involved. You work through the mind, you work through the senses, but you do not involve your ego.

12

Sadhana for the Mind

Community Free School, Boulder, Colorado, 3 September 1982.

**Why do we practise yoga and why should we practise yoga?
What is the first and ultimate purpose?**

We cannot talk of ultimate purposes all the time, we have to talk about the milestones also. We know that through yoga we get mental peace, relaxation of the body, freedom from some sorts of illnesses, sometimes supernatural mental powers, self-discipline, etc. Western civilization is creating more and more people who are attracted to yoga because it gives definite methods with which to better the quality of our behaviour, temperament, character, nature, and so on.

These are not the ultimate purposes of yoga, but we can practise yoga for these purposes, because we need them. Therefore, I'm not criticizing anyone who learns yoga for these purposes, or who teaches yoga for these purposes. These things are the milestones, the stopping centres or stations through which you may have to go. Or course, you may not; sometimes you can get a direct flight.

The patterns of the mind

Sage Patanjali, who was the exponent of the *Yoga Sutras*, explains at the outset that yoga is, 'Blocking the patterns of the mind.' When the aspirant accomplishes this, the seer stops being the seer. He doesn't see anything; he experiences only

himself. There is a total cessation of dual experience: I and you, I and experience, and experience and experiencer. I am you, and I am experience.

According to Sage Patanjali, these patterns are fivefold:

1. Objective awareness: consciousness of outside stimuli, such as sounds, smells, and seeing ordinary objects
2. Subjective awareness: our consciousness of stimuli and sensations within the body
3. Past awareness: the memories of past events
4. Illusory awareness: the psychic fantasies
5. No awareness: sleep.

This sleep must be eliminated. As Swami Sivananda said, “Samadhi is not absence of awareness, but it is total awareness, without any objective knowledge. It is total awareness of the self, inside.”

Those five patterns have to be blocked, and for that the entire sadhana is placed before everybody: asanas, pranayamas, concentration, meditation, hatha yoga, purification, penance, austerity, self-inquiry and many, many more. Many people practise kriya yoga. Paramahansa Yogananda used to teach kriya yoga. Some gurus teach mantra yoga. Some teach nada yoga, the yoga of sounds. Some teach kundalini yoga straight away to awaken the kundalini. There is not just one type of sadhana that we have to teach. There are many types of sadhana according to the quality of the aspirant.

In the *Yoga Sutras*, Sage Patanjali has given choices. He says you can concentrate on the behaviour of the mind. You can concentrate on any great saint who has eliminated his passion. You can concentrate on *Om*. You can concentrate on your throat, navel, heart, or between the two eyebrows. He gives many choices.

The need for a guru

The scheme of sadhana cannot be the same for everybody. There are so many people here. One type of sadhana cannot be given to each one of you, because qualitatively you are not the same. Religion wise you may be the same.

Nationality wise you may be the same, but spiritually no two people are the same from the point of view of evolution of consciousness. Therefore, in order to achieve substantial, real progress, inside and out, you have to consult your guru. Every aspirant who wants to practise the higher levels must have a guru, and you must have only one guru. Sadhana is the way to transcend the total mind. It is the way to jump over all the patterns of the mind, so it is essential that the first search is for a guru.

I am not sure if many gurus can fulfil the spiritual aim of an aspirant, though gurus can inspire us. Swami Sivananda once told me that he wanted me to go to different saints. I said, “I do not have to go at all, because you have taught me everything.” He said, “No, saints and yogis and great teachers are inspirers. You may not get initiation from them. You don’t even have to get a personal or private lesson from them, but you must go and seek their good wishes and blessings.” So he sent me to Ramana Maharshi, Anandamai Ma, Aurobindo and many others.

If you are sincere in your practices, you will definitely come across obstacles which are created by the mind, which are a natural outcome of the mind’s entry into spiritual life. Two of the most important of these are irregularity and cravings, and these must both be counteracted.

Regularity

If you are regular in your yoga practices, even if you devote a minimum period, say fifteen minutes a day, you will definitely be able to travel very far in your inner self. But once you leave your sadhana, your practice, even for a short time, I would say even for a few days, you cannot restart at the same point. That is one of the most peculiar things that I have found in the path of spiritual experience.

Knowledge can be restarted from the point where you left off, but experience must be restarted from the beginning. That is a difficult point. Practise your asanas or pranayamas for a year. Then leave them for six months and you can no

longer say, “I have practised them for one year.” That is lost. It is lost so far as experience is concerned, but as far as knowledge is concerned you haven’t lost anything. This is one of the basic differences.

Therefore, because the ultimate purpose of yoga is not knowledge but experience, you must be regular. Of course, you have a busy life. You may not be able to practise yoga for an hour a day, or even daily. If this is the case, do it twice or thrice a week, even if only for fifteen minutes per session, but do it regularly and you’ll make progress. It is not the time you spend, but the continuity that is important. This constancy of practice is called *abhyasa*.

Dispassion

Another important point in the practice of yoga which Sage Patanjali tells us about is *vairagya*, dispassion. When you are practising and you sit down in a yoga posture and close your eyes, you must have total control over the cravings of the sense experiences which you see. That is called *vairagya*. During the time of the practices, if the cravings of the past, heard and seen experiences float across the mind, you should be able to handle them. You should be able to hold them, through *vairagya*.

Eventually, when you have jumped over the obstacles, and when the *vruttis*, the patterns of mind are blocked, then the experience emerges from within.

One practice you can do

Now, I will suggest one little practice to you all. It is not compulsory, but you can integrate it with your daily practices. It is a pranayama, and pranayama is the gateway to meditation. It is not merely a way to increase the intake of oxygen. Through pranayama you can shut the mind for some time; the external perceptions, the mundane awareness, can be shut out. This is how to do it.

You first have to perfect one of the postures. You can’t just sit on a chair and practise pranayama. I’m not just saying

this as a swami, but as one who knows something about the workings of the body. You must have a posture, and the postures are three: lotus posture (padmasana), adept's posture (siddhasana for men and siddha yoni asana for women) and the easy posture (sukhasana).

Of all these three, the adept's posture is best. Press the perineum with your left heel and place the right heel above the pubic bone. Then lock the toes and sit with the hands in jnana mudra. Now sit quietly for two or three minutes and simply concentrate on the natural breath. Just observe it going in and out.

Then block the right nostril with a finger over the nose, and breathe in slowly and quietly through the left nostril. Retain the breath. At this time of retention, practise two locks (two controls), which are called *bandhas*. One is the chin lock (jalandhara bandha), in which the chin is pressed into the chest and the shoulders raised by straightening the arms. The other is moola bandha, contracting the muscles of the perineum.

When the retention of breath is finished, relax the bandhas and exhale through the opposite nostril. Then retain the exhalation, apply the chin lock and moola bandha again, this time adding uddiyana bandha, the pulling up and in of the abdominal wall. At the end of exhalation, relax the bandhas and breathe in through the right nostril, and repeat as before.

In this way, breathe in and out, from side to side, until a complete round is finished. Then, sit down quietly, concentrate on the natural breath in and out, and if you have a mantra, such as *Om* or *Soham*, just practise it with the breath. Don't concentrate. Just relax. When your lungs have relaxed, start another round. Complete round two, then pause for one minute. Continue this until you have completed five rounds, with a minute between each. Then relax and concentrate at the mid-eyebrow centre on the small light. That's all. It hardly takes fifteen minutes. To begin with, do five rounds of this pranayama, combined with the bandhas.

After some weeks of this practice, you must inhale, retain, exhale, and retain, according to certain ratios of time. These ratios may be either 1:2:2:1, or 1:1:2:1. Note that the time of exhalation in each case is twice that of inhalation, and this is important for a beginner. After one or two years you can change this, but not at the beginning.

How do you fix the ratio? If one unit is eight seconds, then, for example, inhalation will be eight seconds, retention sixteen seconds, exhalation sixteen seconds and external retention eight seconds. The units may also be counted by the repetition of a mantra, such as Gayatri mantra, or *Om Namaha Shivaya*, or your personal mantra.

You should not do more than five rounds. At the beginning, it will take only fifteen minutes, but as you advance, increasing the number of repetitions per unit, these five rounds can take you up to three hours. As your vital capacity increases, a unit which was five mantras long at the start will increase to fifteen and more. If one unit comprises fifteen mantras, then internal retention will be thirty, exhalation will be thirty and external retention will be fifteen.

As you advance in the practice of pranayama, take care of your constipation. In the beginning it doesn't matter, but when you go beyond half an hour you must avoid constipation by practising kunjla, shankhaprakshalana and neti. At the end of pranayama, you meditate on the mid-eyebrow centre, or the heart, or mooladhara chakra (the seat of kundalini).

Before I close, let me tell you one important thing. Even though at the end of the practices of meditation, all the forms have to be dropped and all the patterns of the mind have to be transcended, as long as we have a mind we definitely need a symbol. The symbol is a base, or an image, without which the mind cannot be solidified, cannot be put into concentration. Therefore, two things are of utmost importance for everybody – the mantra and the psychic symbol. With the mantra and the symbol, and the practices of pranayama, one can go ahead with one's day-to-day practices.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What kind of symbol should we focus on?

Usually, a person's mantra and symbol are based on his or her astrological sign. If you are a Leo, then your symbol will be of fire, such as a flame of fire or a candle. If you are a water sign, it can be a blue lotus or the sea. The mantra is chosen in a similar way.

However, this is not always necessary. Sometimes when you see a symbol somewhere it is just right. For example, in Mexico I went to an ancient temple and saw a big shivalingam, which is unusual, even in India. It was so impressive that for a full six months afterwards I could see it even with my eyes open. Maybe that was because my original symbol was a shivalingam.

Even though there is a universal human experience, it seems to me that there is a great dilemma in understanding the difference between the Eastern experience and the Western experience. If I listen to you, I can almost understand it from the point of view of my Western experiences.

Yes, everyone understands according to his own background. That is where we begin, but later there comes a point when experiences move parallel to each other. For the beginner there is some sort of a difference, but later there is no difference at all.

I've noticed that since I've been involved in yoga, I've been very erratic and restless in my meditation sessions.

In order to maintain consistency and regularity, we should practise some asanas, pranayamas and some of the purification kriyas. When you practise meditation for some time, physiological changes take place in the body. There is a change in the behaviour of the nervous system, a reduction in temperature in the body and a change in the behaviour of the heart. After a few days or a few months of practise, your inner nature compels you to stop because it finds the symptoms

increasing. Therefore, you should do some asanas and shatkarmas to resolve the physiological problems, pranayama to maintain proper balance of the nervous system so that there won't be excitement or depression, and you should practise the meditation itself in siddhasana.

Diet is important also. If you meditate for only ten, fifteen or twenty minutes, it is not so crucial, but if you meditate one, two, or three hours, you have to take care of the diet. Prolonged meditation brings down the inner body temperature, influencing the digestive juices. Hence, you should take light food which is easy to digest.

Most importantly, one should practise minimum meditation, but very regularly. Now regularity does not necessarily mean every day. Regularity means that you fix regular days, for example, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, that's all. Then do it for years.

If everybody on this planet existed in a state of harmony and love, in this crystal, higher state of awareness that you speak of, what do you believe would then be the next step?

That's what saints have said. That's what Aldous Huxley said. That's what Sri Aurobindo said, and that is what Hindu mythology also talks about – a race with higher consciousness, and I can clearly see it.

People are now passing through an important period of spiritual crisis, and as a result they are trying to express their inner spiritual experience in the form of yoga, meditation and tantra. In the last three decades, look how many great people are coming with us. We believe that within a few decades we shall have a better understanding, and that people will have a higher spiritual consciousness.

Okay, but let's say that everybody existed in that state, that we had already achieved that state, what is the next step?

Oh, you have put a very difficult question. You see, after achieving higher spiritual consciousness, one still operates in the realm of prakriti, maya or duality. Many saints and

sages, prophets and avatars, in spite of their being totally identical with the higher Spirit, have moved and lived and acted with us.

Similarly, we will do business, we will run hospitals, we will run colleges, universities and poultry farms, but the person who will be dealing with those things will not be a stupid man with animal consciousness, he will be a wise man with a developed consciousness.



13

Satsang

The residence of Ananda and Kamala Miller, Denver, Colorado, 4 September 1982.

What part of Hinduism is essential, and what part of that essence is carried by the trappings?

First of all, Hinduism is not a religion; it is a federation of religious ideologies, just as education is not a subject, but a blend of so many faculties: chemistry, biology, maths, etc. You could call Hinduism a vedic religion, or vedic dharma, because all the parts of it have drawn inspiration from the Vedas.

The different groups of Hinduism are relatively recent, however. During the upanishadic period, there were no concepts of Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Shakti, etc., at all. At this time they were only talking about maya, jivatma, paramatma, etc. But when Jainism and Buddhism came, they found that it was very difficult for the vedantic and upanishadic philosophy to survive because it was so metaphysical and abstruse.

So they brought in the different groups through the elucidation of the Puranas: the *Shiva Purana*, the *Vishnu Purana*, etc., developing the theme on the basis of the trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Then gradually they identified their people with those members of the trinity. Hanuman and Shankaracharya were identified with Shiva as avatars. Rama and Krishna were considered as avatars of Vishnu, etc. They even tried their best to identify Buddha also as the avatar of

Narayana, and throughout the theme, you have social values as well as the spiritual ones.

Regarding the more ritualized aspects, such as the sectarian marks, the tilaks, etc., most of these had practical uses whose significance was lost over time. The tilak, for instance, was used as an aid to pratyahara, with concentration on the eyebrow centre.

As we look at the different groups of the Hindu dharma, we see a lot of non-essential ritual and paraphernalia surrounding the essence. If we removed the non-essentials, how much would we have left?

If the non-essentials were removed, then they would be replaced by something else, such as drugs, because ordinary people need those things to help attain pratyahara. Pratyahara is so difficult and tiring, trying to isolate the mind from the senses. So, in order to deal with the mind in this way, rituals influence the subconscious mind and the emotions so that pratyahara is automatically sustained. If you remove the non-essentials and keep only the mantra japa and such things you will have to replace them with a new substitute.

As we look at India today, we see something new happening. The brahmin boys are going to school, college and university, adopting a Western lifestyle, and throwing away their sacred threads and all the other symbols of brahmin life. How will this affect the future?

If a brahmin boy discards a thread, he still remains a brahmin, because the vedic way of thinking is very flexible. According to vedic thinking, they say, "Yes, this is non-essential, but it serves a purpose. However, if you think that it does not serve your purpose, then discard it. Still your brahminism remains."

You see, it is in the way of thinking. There is a kshatriya way of thinking. There is a shudra way of thinking, and so on. There is even a particular inner awareness, whether it is ethical awareness, moral awareness, spiritual awareness, personality awareness or social awareness, it remains the

same. The brahmin community in India has more or less maintained their association with their spirit. Even if they do not carry on the purohit karma, or the pooja karma, still they maintain that awareness. They even practise it in some form or another, because there are some rituals in every family.

I'd prefer to be a celibate for a while, because I want to have the benefit of retaining the energy rather than dispersing it. What do you think about that?

How old are you?

Thirty.

Your zodiac sign?

Libra.

Married?

No, I had a girlfriend for about a year, but we split up recently.

Of course, there is no doubt that if you observe *brahmacharya*, celibacy, not merely refraining from sex, but also redeeming yourself from fantasy, and channel your mind towards something more creative (external or internal), the speed of progress will be very fast. What a non-celibate can achieve in six years, a celibate will achieve in one year. Here are some suggestions:

1. You have to organize your day; have a timetable of your daily routine.
2. Diet is important. A high protein diet stimulates the sex hormones.
3. During private hours, even the clothing and its colour are important. The colour has an effect on the mind.
4. Redeem yourself from sexual fantasies.
5. Disassociate from the actual sexual act.
6. Avoid sexual conversations, films, etc. Just forget about it. You don't have to think all the time, "I'm a celibate". Just make certain disciplines for yourself, and follow them quietly. You may not succeed 100%, but you will succeed 50%.
7. You have to change your bed; you have to have a proper bed.

8. Certain asanas and pranayamas are recommended also.
9. Avoid constipation.

If you have been contemplating celibacy, it is one of the best ideas an aspirant can get, especially in the West, because most people here think that with just ordinary sexual interaction they can go up. To maintain celibacy is difficult; it's not an easy job, but if you can accomplish all the rituals connected with it, it's much easier.



14

Satsang

The residence of Surendra Purohit, Denver, Colorado, 4 September 1982.

Will you tell us something about yoga as a way of life?

All of you should know of the instructions of Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna about the possibility of the integration of yoga into one's daily life. At one point, Arjuna asks Krishna, "Tell me, what am I to do; should I work or should I renounce?" Here Arjuna implied he believed that yoga was something other than living life, and many people think this today. Lord Krishna re-emphasized that yoga and karma should go hand-in-hand.

If life is expressed without integrating it with yoga, then it brings unhappiness, frustration and agony, which most of us experience. But when the mind is disciplined and the body is healthy and able to cope, we can maintain the efficiency of action side by side with balance of mind. Therefore, yoga is not just a pastime for recluses, it is not just some kind of sport, and it's not an escape by which we try to forget the realities of life.

I know that there are many sects in the world which try to escape from the realities of life, but yoga is neither a sect nor an escape. Yoga is a science which teaches us to be strong enough physically, emotionally and mentally to face anything, whether frustrations, disappointments, ill-health, passions or the invariable concomitants of our emotional attachments.

In the first chapter of the *Gita*, Arjuna has all the symptoms of a nervous breakdown, just as we all face nervous breakdowns in life when we are not able to resolve conflicts. Yoga doesn't start with purity; yoga ends with purity. Yoga doesn't start with peace of mind; it starts with a disturbed mind. Yoga doesn't start with saintliness; it ends with saintliness. Yoga starts when the balance is lost. You know it. It is not just a philosophy.

When you are angry, what do you do? You try to control yourself, and trying to control yourself is yoga. When the scales are heavily loaded against you, what do you do? You try to balance them, and that's yoga, the attempt to balance them. You attempt to balance the mind in the face of adversity. Yoga deals with depression, with disappointment and with the breakdown of our usual coping mechanisms.

Now, coming to the practical side, yoga is not only philosophy; it is more practice than theory. The practices of yoga are spread all over the ancient culture of humanity, called vedic dharma. For many thousands of years, wise people have been researching, assessing and realizing newer and newer ways of tackling man's eternal and never-ending problems of body, mind, emotions, intellect, subconscious and unconscious.

Even as the modern West is tackling the problems of material life and producing new things every day, the rishis of India, for thousands of years, have been discovering ways of self-control, self-discipline, self-understanding and self-realization. There has only been one thing in the minds of these sages – how to deal with the mind.

In the tantras, in yoga, in Vedanta, in the Upanishads, and everywhere, the subject is: how to deal with the mind and how to realize the highest consciousness in ourselves. Thus, they codified it, and as you know they called the different systems karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, raja yoga, and their branches. Through the practices of these systems, one can deal very efficiently with the four aspects of one's nature: one's dynamism, emotions, intellect and psychic propensities.

When the guru and disciple live together, apart from the teachings given by the guru, is there a specific shakti or energy which the guru transmits to the disciple, and which lives from that time onwards in the disciple?

There are two types of gurus and two types of disciples. Some gurus are tutors and their disciples are students; that is the process of teaching. They teach hatha yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga, *Gita*, etc., and are known as acharyas.

However, the true process of guru is through transmission. There is total rapport between guru and chela; they function almost on the same level and at the same frequency, and the guru transmits his energy to the disciple at the intuitive level. However, it does not happen with every disciple and with every guru.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a great realized person in our times. He had many disciples who used to come to him, and he used to instruct them on *jnana*, knowledge. That is called satsang, just as I am talking to you now. But what happened between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda at one time is called transmission, and that transmission in vedic terminology and in yogic and tantric terminology is known as shaktipat.

Shaktipat is the transfer of the inner energy of the guru to the disciple, but as I said it does not happen between every guru and every disciple. Ramakrishna did it only with Vivekananda. Even when there is transmission of shaktipat from a guru to a disciple, it is necessary for the disciple to improve his own quality, so that he becomes a good conductor of the guru's spiritual energy. The perfect disciple is one who surrenders his ego; surrender of the buddhi, or surrender of emotion, is not the ultimate surrender.

You love your guru; that's alright, and you decide, "Okay, from today, I'm going to surrender," but that's not final. Buddhi is not the last item of spiritual life. Buddhi is a crust, the intellect. The emotions, too, your bhakti, are only a part of it. You can cry for your guru, "Guru, where have you gone? I'm pining for you. I cannot live without you. Please come." That's emotion, but it's not final.

However, there is a very hard nut to crack, and that is the 'I', and that 'I' is sometimes very subtle. Swami Sivananda used to say that even the process of renunciation becomes the basis for ego. Sometimes you are very humble; you are the most humble; you are ready to serve anyone without distinction. Even that humility can become the basis for ego. Sannyasa, compassion, mercy, charity, 'I am nothing, my Lord', can all become the basis of ego. It is such a powerful force and demon in man that it can assume thousands of forms.

How do we become free from ego? By perfecting discipleship. The perfection of discipleship is the perfecting of sadhana also. There are many beautiful stories in the Upanishads, the Puranas and other ancient books, where the disciples were tested in various ways, and many of them found that they did not come up to the mark. Some of the disciples, on the other hand, succeeded. When salt or sugar are mixed with water, the duality ceases. They become one; there is no longer any separate identity. That has to be the relationship between God and devotee, and between the guru and his disciple.

What does it mean to be a sannyasin, and what is the literal meaning of the words swami and guru?

Nyasa means 'consecration or dedication', and *sam* means 'thoroughly or completely'. The word *nyasa* also implies donation, for example, if you place some flowers or money, that is *nyasa*. Suppose you have \$50,000, that's your money. If you donate it to some institution, it no longer belongs to you. Similarly, everybody has a lot of wealth within their mind, intellect, emotion, body, intuition, etc., but they have been using them only for themselves. When they cease to use these faculties for themselves and donate them to the general welfare of mankind in one form or the other, that is *sannyasa*.

According to the Vedas, *sannyasa* is the culmination of man's progressive consciousness, which they decided should happen when he became seventy-five years of age. During the time of the Vedas, the span of life was considered to be

one hundred years. So, they decided that the first twenty-five years of life should be spent in *brahmacharya* (studentship), the second twenty-five years as a *grihastha* (householder), the third twenty-five years in *vanaprastha* (retired) and the fourth twenty-five years in *sannyasa*. However, these divisions did not work, because they found that the culmination of the progressive consciousness can take place at any time. At the age of ten you may be a total person, or at the age of seventy-five you may still be clinging to the ordinary things of life.

From the physical point of view also, it is impractical for a person to leave his hearth and home and go away, coughing, with no teeth to eat chapatis, with the body shivering and unable to climb the stairs – it never worked out. In the case of Shankara, it didn't even apply. In the case of Sanat Kumar, Mahavir Swami, Buddha and so many others, it didn't work that way either. Most of them took to the ideals of *sannyasa* at a very tender and promising age, and that's how they were able to serve the world in such a great way.

Swami is the name which came later, in the ninth century. Formerly, they were known by the titles *rishi*, *maharishi*, *mahatma*, etc. Then, in the eighth or ninth century (it's still controversial) Adi Shankaracharya, who was born in Kerala in southwest India, organized the ten branches of *sannyasa* (the Dashnami order). They were given the prefix *swami* and ten suffixes: *Saraswati*, *Puri*, *Bharati*, *Tirtha*, *Ashrama*, *Giri*, *Sagar*, *Parvat*, *Vanam* and *Aranyam*, so that the *sannyasins'* names, for instance, became *Swami Sivananda Saraswati*, *Swami Vivekananda Saraswati*, *Swami Yogananda Giri*, like that.

The word *swami* means 'master of one's own self'. We are slaves of the mind, so we are literally not *swamis*. While we are slaves of the emotions and passions, we cannot be *swamis*. We are the slaves of ambition and outside circumstances, so we are not our own masters. When the word *swami* is added to the name as a prefix, it is a reminder that you do not just belong to a cult or a sect. It is much more than that.

When I become my own master, I decide what to do and what not to do. You say, “Oh, I didn’t mean to get angry, but somehow I lost my temper. I didn’t want to do it, but somehow I did it.” This means that you didn’t have control over your instincts, emotions and reactions. That should not happen. I think that everybody, not just a sannyasin, should be a swami, if not completely, at least fifty percent. Thereby, you can avoid most of the tragedies and accidents in life by inculcating the spirit of swamihood into your relations with the world, and with yourself.

Now, what is a guru? Guru has nothing to do with sannyasa or swami. Anyone can become a guru the moment he or she becomes effulgent, with the robes or without the robes. The moment you traverse the realm of darkness, when the inner stuff becomes as clear to you as this outer stuff, you become a guru. A guru is more than just a teacher. Of course, in India, any teacher may be called Guruji, but really, the literal meaning of *guru* is ‘one who dispels darkness’.

There is no external darkness here. I can see you and you can see me. But at midnight, during the rainy days, you can’t see each other; that’s external darkness. In the same way, when there is internal darkness, you can’t see something within you. I think that most people cannot see that inner thing. The inner darkness must be removed, and it is the guru who does it. A teacher, an acharya, a master sahib, a yoga teacher, a mantra teacher, a scholar, a professor, none of them can remove the darkness. The guru has a special quality within him which allows him to remove the inner darkness. It is called *atma jnana*, realization of his true nature.

15

Benefits of Kriya Yoga

Unitarian Church, Denver, Colorado, 4 September 1982.

This year I went to the southern part of Colombia, to a quiet and peaceful place called San Agustin. Swami Niranjan had already been there while he lived in Colombia for a number of years, and had collected unusual photographs and documents about the place, which he exhibited at our International Convention in Bogota in 1975.

We toured San Agustin over hundreds of miles, sometimes by jeep, sometimes on horseback and sometimes on foot. In that historic place, there are ancient stone carvings, probably over five thousand years old, which depict people in classical yoga postures. There are people performing the scorpion pose and nauli, simhasana (the lion pose), siddhasana (the adept's pose), padmasana (the lotus posture), vipareeta karani mudra (the first practice of kriya yoga, which is used for sublimating the sexual energy to the higher centres), and many others. Where is San Agustin in relation to India? On the opposite side of the world.

I have also been to Scandinavia and spoken to the village folk there. The concept of ida, pingala and sushumna, which is symbolized by the snake in Indian yogic scriptures, is part of their ancient culture too. This is just a glimpse which I am presenting to you in order to let you know that long before this present civilization, in fact, many thousands of years ago,

the yogic culture was spread across the world. However, on account of some geographical disturbances, everything was disrupted. The rest of the world forgot about its innate deep spiritual culture, but in India, this science was preserved and protected by a ceaseless tradition of sannyasins.

These swamis, who renounce their wealth and home and dissociate themselves from social and political activities, lead a life of contemplation, self-purification and study. They receive theoretical and practical knowledge of yoga from the guru and, in turn, transfer the knowledge to their disciples. That is how the most ancient culture of mankind was preserved, protected and perpetuated. So, when yoga comes to any point of the world, it comes from India, but it is not Indian alone. India had the privilege of preserving it, but it was always a worldwide heritage.

Yoga for all

In the *Mahabharata*, a great epic scripture of India, there is a clear-cut statement made, “Yoga is necessary for everybody, for an emperor, for a ruler, for a sick person suffering from a chronic ailment, for one who wants to enjoy the sensualities of life in the best possible manner, for one who wants to discipline his body and mind in order to express a great amount of efficiency in his profession and work – for all!” Yoga is a science which can be applied anywhere and at any stage of one’s personal development.

If you want to enjoy good food, you must have a good digestive system and yoga can help you to have it. If you want to have a sound sleep without any disturbances, yoga can help you to do it. This is the material aspect. But more than that, if you are religious and want to have deeper experiences, yoga will help you. It does not matter whether you are Hindu, Christian, Jew or Zoroastrian, yoga will help.

After all, in order to have deeper religious experiences, you will have to face the demon before you – the mind. When you pray, the vagaries of the mind are there to disturb you. When you try to think about God or when you talk about

Him, there is the mind to disturb you. How are you going to deal with it? Is there any religion which has a definite technique?

If we need to make our religious experience richer, and if we wish that our religious experience should become intimate with our mental experience, then we must apply certain techniques in order to pacify the mind, to resolve the evil tactics of the mind. Yoga is the source of those techniques.

The problem of dealing with the mind

We can't afford to waste years fighting with the mind. Only this morning a man told me that he has been meditating for fifteen years, fighting with the mind. I said, "Then you have lost fifteen years. Could you not find a way whereby you could bypass the mind, whereby you could make a compromise with the mind, whereby the mind could thus be transformed?"

Mind is not homogeneous; it is a composition of twenty-six elements according to Samkhya, nyaya and yoga philosophies. Mind is a composition, just as this building is a composition of bricks, mortar, timber, glass and many other things, and if you want to dismantle this building, you have to take apart everything that it is composed of. But how can you dismantle the mind when you do not know what its properties are?

For us, mind is emotion, passion, desire, memory, thought, feeling, etc., but these are not the mind; they are only expressions of it. Light from a bulb is not electricity but an expression of electricity. In the same way, whatever you feel on the conscious plane, whatever you experience by your conscious mind (depression, elation, the whole big list) is not the mind. It is the vritti of the mind, a manifestation, an expression of the mind.

The sadhanas which we have been practising are very nice, but they are not powerful enough to jump over the mind. Whichever way you go, you experience the mind standing in front of you like a big demon about to devour you, and you

have not been able to solve the problem. The young people have been taking LSD and marijuana to try to bypass the mind, but what is the use of bypassing the mind if, because of the drug, you cannot then direct the forces of the mind? Before you bypass the mind, you must have the control to be able to handle the forces of consciousness, otherwise you just go into hallucinations and all sorts of rubbish.

You must have control over your inner experiences. You should be able to direct your spiritual experiences, not only on the conscious plane or subconscious plane or unconscious plane, but on the superconscious plane also. Can you direct your dreams? No, you can't. If you are dreaming and somebody comes with a revolver to kill you, can you influence your dream? No, you can't; you are completely under the control of the experience of the dream because you have no control over the inner functions of consciousness.

Now we come to a very important point. When you want to control the mind, you become especially aware of it, but when you do not want to control it, the mind doesn't exist. The duality of the mind is created by you, there is really no duality there. When the principle in my sadhana is just, "Well, I will do sadhana, I don't have to control my mind or deal with it," then there is singularity of mind. However, the moment I say, "I have to control the mind," then it is split into two, because the controlling aspect and the aspect that it is trying to control are one thing.

You don't have two minds; they are merely two patterns, two vrittis, with one trying to control the other. When you are sitting there and you want to control the mind, who thinks of controlling the mind? Mind is dealing with mind; it can't do it. That approach is simply unscientific, a tussle and a conflict between ego and superego. We do it in our yoga practices every day and that is the reason many people who do this type of sadhana are not able to gain what they seek.

I am not against self-control, but I know definitely that there are different types of people, different grades of people. There are some people who have no problem with their

mind. If I ask Swami Niranjan to sit down, concentrate on the candle, don't worry, dampen the mind; he can do it. But if it was someone whose mind is distracted, oscillating, dissipated and disturbed, how can he do it?

You have to deal with the mind very scientifically, and this is especially true nowadays. Two hundred years ago, when life was simpler, the mind was calmer. Nowadays, there are so many excitements that the modern mind is in a state of agitation. For this reason, we must find a method of yoga by which we can bypass the mental experiences, such as oscillation, dissipation, distraction and depression and achieve a balanced state.

Usually, when we practise meditation, we try to approach the mind directly and that is why we fail. Hence, sadhana should be designed in such a way that you do not have to deal with the mind directly, and one such sadhana is kriya yoga, another is singing kirtan.

Kriya yoga

Kriya yoga is an ancient system, a part of tantra, containing many practices which create an objectivity of mind. The consciousness is first consolidated in you. Then it is objectified, and when this occurs, you can project it to any person or any object and it can be transmitted any distance. In India, the Hindus call this *darshan*, which means 'separate reality'. It may sound very mythological but it is not. The parapsychological experiments talk a lot about it.

The science of kriya yoga was neglected for many thousands of years. In hatha yoga a few kriyas were taught, but not scientifically. For example, one kriya which was taught and which you can practise is khechari mudra, where the tongue is folded back to touch the soft palate. When you practise khechari mudra, there is an indirect stimulation created which travels up to the highest centres in the brain and, as a result, it is said in kriya yoga, the *amrit*, or nectar, begins to flow. When it flows, it is said to metabolize and become integrated into the physical body.

There are three of these kriyas that I will mention: khechari mudra (the mudra I just mentioned), shambhavi mudra (mid-eyebrow gaze) and nasikagra mudra (the nosetip gaze). Remember these three kriyas. When you practise them for some time, say ten or fifteen minutes, you get a sort of mood. You get very high without drugs and at this time you are able to bypass the mind. You can try these any time, but they could be beneficially integrated into your religious practices, and why not? Before you read the *Gita* or Bible or Koran, just sit down and practise nasikagra mudra.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* there are two places where Krishna instructs Arjuna about these mudras. About nasikagra mudra he says, “Spread your blanket and deerskin, far from fire, far from flames, far from any hard substance, and sit. Then gaze on the tip of your nose. Don’t look here and don’t look there. Then the mind will become automatically peaceful.”

About shambhavi mudra he says, “In between the two eyebrows, fix your gaze and, in the course of time, your consciousness will manifest there in the form of light.” These are only three kriyas of kriya yoga, but even just by these practices it is possible that you will not have to deal with the mind.

In kriya yoga, there are seventy-two kriyas and seven of them are actually practised with the eyes open. The rule is – do not close the eyes. When you are practising these kriyas, you don’t even have to be strict with your physical posture. You can move, you can look anywhere, you are allowed to maintain a relaxed attitude throughout.

The practices of kriya yoga are very appropriate for the people of today because our mental distress and disturbances have reached the peak point. I think it is no use now for us to tell you or anybody else to control the mind. Centuries have gone by but nothing is happening. It is much better to understand: one, the reality of the mind, two, its relationship with your consciousness, and three, the nature of your consciousness. The Upanishads say that the nature of consciousness is *sat*, *chit* and *ananda* (truth, consciousness and bliss). One excellent way to realize this is through kriya yoga.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Do you believe in good and bad, or just in conscious and unconscious actions?

Surely, there is good and there is bad. Firstly, if someone is cheating someone, or if somebody is murdering someone, or if someone is taking poison, it is bad. Good and bad are the two traits of the mind, body and individual, but they are, of course, not absolute.

Secondly, you have to believe for some time in good and bad. If you go deep and analyze yourself properly, or if you introspect, you will realize that virtually everybody does believe in good or bad. A person may not know or he may not acknowledge, or in his ignorance or arrogance, he may say that he doesn't believe in it, but he does.

However, for one who has transcended the realm of duality, for the person who has developed equal vision of mind, there is no consciousness of good and bad, because he has transcended all notions of duality. If I say that I don't believe in good or bad, it means that I have transcended duality, and if I have transcended duality, then I am not an ordinary man. However, it is necessary for every ordinary person to have a clear-cut awareness about good and bad, in relation to society, to his body, to his mind and to his spiritual progress.

If there is unmitigated bad, do you think that evil people know they are committing evil? And if we are instruments of God's will, why are we still killing each other?

Everybody knows what is good and what is bad. Every person knows what is good for one and what is bad for one, but on account of the limitations of his personality, even though he knows something is bad, he does it anyhow. He is under the control of his karma. That's all we can say. Regarding the second part of your question, in my opinion, we need not involve God with our good and bad deeds. Keep him aloof; that is much better.

Can a yogi with an opened ajna chakra open the ajna of another person by shaktipat?

I don't think so, but let me explain it. The guru has the capacity to transmit a part of his power to his disciple. When that power is transferred, it is received by his ajna chakra. That is called *shaktipat*. At that time, the disciple has very fantastic experiences, such as the ability to practise all the asanas without any knowledge and without any practice, and all the pranayamas, even if he has not been taught. However, that is his own manifestation. He does not have the power to transmit it to someone else. In order to be able to transmit the powers of ajna chakra, one must be a great yogi himself.



16

Satsang

The residence of Natwar and Nalini Mathur, Anaheim Hills, California, 5 September 1982.

Can you please tell us about the tantra yoga system?

First, yoga came to the West because it was necessary. Later, the discoverers realized that yoga is a part of tantra. Many great scholars from Europe and America studied the science of tantra. Formerly, tantra was misunderstood, not only by Westerners, but by Indians as well. They thought that tantra was a science of magic, witchcraft, sorcery and black practices, and they identified tantra with burial grounds, wine, illicit relationships and improper diet. Many books were written by authors who were totally unfamiliar with this subject.

It was in the sixties, seventies and eighties that some scientists began to discover more about tantra, because in modern physics we have a concept of the liberation of energy from matter. Energy is inherent in matter; at one stage it is matter and at another stage it is energy. Therefore, these two are interconvertible. As this is so, then within us energy is inherent in the mind, in the body, in the nadis, in motion, in passions, in ambitions, etc. How do we liberate it?

Any thought force is material force; mind is matter and is composed of twenty-four *tattwas* or elements, just as any motor car is composed of many parts. Now, if you know a way to expand the mind, you can liberate the energy. Liberation,

moksha, does not imply a religious process. It is a scientific process, just as is the release of energy from matter by the process of nuclear fission and fusion. In the same way, if you want to release the *shakti*, energy which is inherent in your mind, in your desires, in your passions, ambitions, anger, greed, mean-mindedness, petty thinking, etc., there is a way – we call it expansion of mind.

What is expansion of mind? This is the subject matter of tantra. It is the subject matter of yoga, which vedic dharma has been teaching for over ten thousand years. When you close the eyes and you behold something in you, that is because the mind has expanded. When there is no sound in this room and you can hear the bell within you, that also is because the mind has expanded.

When the mind expands, either by sadhana or by good karmas of your previous birth, what happens? Surdas said, “The blind can see, the deaf can hear and the dumb can speak.” The same idea is given by Tulsidas in the *Ramacharitamanas*: “When expansion of mind takes place, a separate reality is created, and this separate reality is known as darshan.”

The word tantra is derived from two roots: *tan*, ‘expansion of mind’, and *tra*, ‘liberation of energy’. The latter refers to the awakening of kundalini shakti. How? Tantra is the theory and there are practices. Hatha yoga is a part of tantra, as are kriya yoga, mantra yoga, laya yoga and others. They are all branches of the tantric system.

However, to be very frank with you, the tantric system was very misunderstood, because this is the only science which proclaims that in order to expand the mind and release the energy, you do not have to change anything in your life. If you are a householder, remain a householder; if you are a brahmachari, remain a brahmachari; if you are eating meat and drinking wine, let it be.

On the other hand, all the religions and all the sadhanas taught by different cults and sects say, “If you want to awaken shakti and realize the Divine, don’t do this; don’t do that.”

Tantra says, “No, you start the spiritual journey from your own doorstep.” If you want to go to New York, you start from here; you don’t have to go all the way to London and start from there. From each place there is a direct road to the final destination. That is the principle of tantra.

It is said in the *Gita*, “Whether you are a brahmin, a shudra, or whatever type of person you are, you can always go ahead”. Yantra, mantra, mandala, remember them; these three are important aspects of tantra. If you say, “I want to practise tantra, what should I do?” I would suggest you practise these three.

How does a mantra work, what are its effects and how can we use one?

When you practise mantra, yantra and mandala, then an effect springs from within yourself. For example, if you have one mantra, *Om Na-mo Bhag-a-vat-e Va-su De-va-ya*, it has twelve syllables. Do not worry about the form of the mantra; it is the sound which is important, the combination of the twelve sounds. When you repeat the mantra, the sound frequencies are created within you, like the incessant waves of the ocean, one after the other. They keep on going deeper and deeper, and as they do, they replace your obsessions, your attachments, your false notions and the *avidya*, ignorance. That is the literal meaning of the mantra, by repetition and reflection of which, the mind becomes free from dross.

If a person is tied up with a rope and you take a knife and cut it, he is free. In the same way, the sound waves of the mantra cut and destroy the mass of *avidya* and all those forces through which your mind is conditioned. You will agree that everybody’s mind is conditioned, and what is this conditioning? Desires, frustrations, greed, delusion, ego, etc.

Even if you want to remove the conditionings of the mind directly, you cannot because there is nothing to replace them. However, mantra can be used. Repeat the mantra; with regular practice the sounds become powerful and resonant. Finally, the sound waves remain and the obsessions, the limitations

of the mind are overshadowed. It is at this time that the expansion takes place.

While you are chanting the mantra, you can feel a candle light in the eyebrow centre, or some people can feel a lotus. Others can feel their ishta devata; there are many experiences which you can have. They are called *anubhava*, inner experiences. You can call them spiritual experiences or psychic experiences and they can be beautiful. Gandhi wrote, "Sometimes I can hear the flute of Krishna." He is not talking about something intellectual; he is talking about his psychic experiences.

There was a saint called Daria Sahib. I don't know if he was a Hindu or a Muslim; maybe he was both. One day, he was sitting quietly and he heard a flute playing. Later he composed a song, "Who is playing the flute within this inner space?" In nada yoga, there are many sounds that you can hear: the flute, the damaru, the evening songs of the birds, the conch, the drum, the waves of the ocean, wind. It is at this point that the awakening of kundalini takes place, because you have transcended matter.

Can you expand your mind by taking drugs? If so is it harmful or beneficial for yoga practices?

During the vedic period, five thousand to seven thousand years ago or more, the brahmins in India used a drink called soma and it was exclusively used by them. They were basically intellectual and ritualistic, and when they took the soma, they used to get very high. In that state, they wrote many hymns, the mantras of the Vedas, and many Upanishads and books on knowledge.

However, later the kshatriyas, who were the ruling class, started taking it too, but they could not handle it. They were too full of emotion, passion and suicidal tendencies, so the whole thing got out of hand. As a result the brahmins suppressed it, and now nobody even knows what it was. After this, they used a drink called baaj, but not much is known about it.

Then came marijuana, and sannyasins did take it and do take it during a certain period of sadhana. When they have lived with the guru for some time and when the guru tells them to go away into solitude in the mountains, they live in a very rigorous climate, and it is at that time that they take marijuana in order to minimize certain animal drives in the mind. However, it is not taken very widely and some do not even take it.

I must make it clear though that if you take those drugs before you have disciplined the mind, and if your body is not purified, pure and sattwic through hatha yoga, proper diet and proper environment, and if you have not conquered the animalistic urges, and if your daily routine is animalistic, awake all night and sleeping by day, you will over the course of time damage the entire nervous system.

The coming generation in fifty or a hundred years will be a retarded generation because of the effect of all the drugs being taken today. I know a lot about marijuana. I have read hundreds of scientific manuals about it and many other drugs as well. In the course of time, it will interfere with the natural flow of hormones that have a very important place in the emotions, in your physical development, in your genetics, etc. This we have to know.

It is also true that if you take a little bit of ganja, the frequencies of the brain become slower. The mind doesn't think at top speed, and you think that state is true relaxation and dhyana. It is not true. Dhyana is not minimizing the speed of the mind. If you are a householder and you want to relax because you are tense after a hard day's work or a family problem and so you want to bring down the speed of the mind, that's a different matter. So far as spiritual experience or inner experience is concerned, do not interfere with the mind.

You do not have to weaken the mind. You don't have to diminish your consciousness to attain higher states. This is very important. Any of you who do *pooja*, worship, meditation, mantra, kriya yoga or any sadhana, please remember this – the consciousness with which you are aware of this objective world is the same consciousness with which you have inner spiritual

experience, but it is just turned inwards. It is no use changing the quality of consciousness, either by drugs or by any other method.

If you want to escape from reality, do it. If you want to have temporary relaxation, do it. If you want to have a sort of tranquillity, do it, but is tranquillity the ultimate solution to life? Is relaxation? I can teach you relaxation today, but tomorrow you may have a family or personal crisis and your relaxation is disintegrated. It is not relaxation which is important; it is the quality of awareness which is important. After achieving that state of mind, nothing can disturb you. At any time you may face tragedies. The scales may be heavily loaded against you. You may be facing depression, dejection and frustration, but if you have that quality of mind, you can survive.

You can take drugs if you like, but for a different purpose, not for spiritual enlightenment or spiritual awareness. The same mind by which you see an object outside is to be turned inside, and it can see the atma, your guru, your ishta devata. When you go in, when you turn your mind inward, it is another waking state. It is not sleep, it is not half sleep, it is not a dream; inside is the same as outside.

What is the best way to meditate, and if I don't see the light, or hear *Om* in my meditation, does it mean I am not progressing on the spiritual path?

The best way to meditate is according to one's qualities. There cannot be only one way. According to yoga, these qualities are fourfold. This is also in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda, Sri Aurobindo, Ramakrishna and many other mahatmas of our times. The qualities are dynamic, emotional, psychic and rational.

However, these qualities of life are not exclusive. You may be predominantly dynamic or emotional or psychic or rational, but you have the other qualities also. Therefore, you must first discover your main quality and pursue that type of yoga. Then you should practise the others to balance your mainstream practices.

What is jnana yoga, and how can we practise it?

There are some people who just read books about Brahman or Atman, or Krishna or Rama, or transmigration, about every blessed subject; they just read and read. When they read or hear, then they contemplate and while contemplating, they may identify with the subject itself. This is jnana. Jnana yoga is not for all. It is not that easy, and often we must wait for it to come by itself.

I remember the story of Isaac Newton, the famous scientist who was invited by his friend for dinner. He went and found that his friend was not there. The man had been called away by his sick mother and had left a note for Newton, but Newton did not see the note and just sat down on the sofa to wait. He started to contemplate his scientific experiments. The next morning his friend came back and Newton was still contemplating. That is one-pointedness, and that is jnana yoga.

We can't do that because we are not one-pointed people. We are distracted people. We are not sincere about the profession which is in our mind. You may be a professor, an engineer, a doctor, a scholar, a sportsman or even a cinema actor, but you are not totally devoted to that aim in life. This is the way we have to understand the whole situation.

What is prana and the significance of pranayama, and in what way does pranayama control prana?

Let me first of all explain the word *prana*. It is a Sanskrit word which means 'that which is in motion'. It is a mobile force and this prana is known by its divisions in the body: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana. These are the fivefold functions of prana. It is through prana that you sneeze, that you blink your eyelids, that you are able to lift your body or a weight, that you digest the food and then eliminate it. These are the various activities of the prana in the body, also known as the five main pranas and the five subsidiary pranas.

Prana is generated in mooladhara chakra, the seat of mother kundalini or kundalini shakti. From that point emanate the three main nadis. The one on the right,

known as *pingala*, *ganga*, *surya* (sun) or *prana nadi*, is the one that carries the pranic energy throughout the body, via the five junctions or chakras. It is distributed the same way as electricity is distributed, first from the generating station (mooladhara), then through the high tension line (*pingala*), then through the transformers (chakras). Then it is distributed from there to the whole of the body through the flows of the lesser nadis.

In electricity, you have two poles: positive and negative. Similarly, in the physical body, you also have two: *pingala* and *ida*, positive and negative, hot line and cold line. *Ida* controls all the mental functions, thinking, dreaming, memorizing, problem solving – the *jnanendriyas*; all the sensorial activities. All the motor activities are controlled by *pingala* – the *karmendriyas*. The final distribution of energy takes place through 72,000 nadis.

Prana is not oxygen. It is not the air that you breathe in. Even without breathing you can live, if you can develop the ability, because the pranas are inherent. For the first four months of development, the pranas are created in the womb. In the first and second months you live on the prana of your mother. In the third month you get a battery installed. Then, after that you have your own generator. From the fourth month, the *atma* enters the body; up to then you are just a part of your mother's body. You are a second self.

Pranayama is a word which is a combination of *prana* and *ayama*, or dimension. The individual soul, the *jivatma*, undergoes experiences and lives in three dimensions. One dimension is waking, the second dimension is dreaming, the third dimension is deep sleep. In all three dimensions it is through the prana that you are alive, otherwise the moment you sleep you must die. The pranas would stop. But the pranas continue to operate during dreaming and during sleep also. Therefore, prana has three dimensions. In dream it operates through the subconscious mind, and in deep sleep it operates through the unconscious mind. The fourth dimension of the *jiva* is known as *turiya*, which in English is known as superconsciousness.

Hence, the four states are waking, dreaming, sleeping and superconscious: *jagrat*, *swapna*, *sushupti* and *turiya*. The first three are the usual states that we go through every day, but in *turiya*, the *pranas* are suspended; you don't live by ordinary *prana*. At that time, there is another quality of *prana*, another type of *prana*, which is generated from *mooladhara chakra*, and one lives on that. It is called *sukshma prana*, subtle *prana*. The other *prana* through which we live, and about which we talked before, is called *sthoola prana*, gross *prana*.

Recently, a yogi suspended his breath, went underground and lived there for ten days. The medical scientists examined him during that time with their instruments. They monitored his heart, blood pressure and brain waves, and issued the declaration, "He is clinically dead." At the end of the ten days he came back out, perfectly well.

This means that after a heart attack, you can live as long as you know how to restart the motor. This is why many scientists are doing research on this nowadays. They are saying, "Maybe we need some sort of *pranayama* or concentration instead of pacemakers." Of course, they are not yet able to find this out, because some of these yogis are very shrewd. This phenomenon occurs because the yogis are able to withdraw the gross *prana* and raise the subtle *prana*.

Through the practices of *pranayama* we are able to make our *pranas* subtler and subtler. To do this we must practise *kumbhaka*, which is retention of breath, scientifically and systematically. In order to have good health, good vital capacity, freedom from cough and coryza, you can start *pranayama* tomorrow morning. But if you want to develop the *sukshma prana*, you will have to make changes, not only in your lifestyle, but also in your dining style.

In *pranayama*, the ratios of breath used for inhalation, retention and exhalation vary according to different teachers. What is the preferred system?

In *pranayama* you breathe in, then stop the breath, then breathe out, then hold the breath. There needs to be some

sort of ratio, and this is sometimes different when taught by different teachers. Some say 1:2:2:1 and others say 1:4:2:2. Still others say 1:2:2:2. I think I can agree with everybody because I understand it. The important thing you have to remember is that for a beginner the ratio between inhalation and exhalation has to be 1:2 because that does not disturb the natural relationship of the lungs and heart.

Have you ever noticed that when you breathe in and then out, the response of the heart changes? It beats differently. Therefore, if you do not maintain the proper breathing ratio, you are changing the natural behaviour of the heart, which is not advisable in the beginning. It is advisable later on because you have to train your heart also. After three or four years, you should be able to practise pranayama with such a ratio that your heart can handle any tension, any stress and speed, so that it doesn't get a heart attack. To have a strong heart you need to have a higher ratio, but for a beginner, keep to the ratio 1:2.

Now, the subject of retention. It is safer to practise minimum retention in the beginning, because everybody has a different type of brain with different resistance and capacities. Once I was teaching pranayama with retention to a class. I asked the students to retain the breath for only ten seconds, and one of the boys fell down in a fit. His brain could not even sustain ten seconds of retention, whereas some brains are stronger and can handle retention of breath for half a minute or more.

When you retain the breath, it is not only the brain which is affected, but the lungs, heart, circulatory system and the nervous system. It is safer to teach minimal retention in the beginning so that the full ratio becomes 1:1:2:1. For some people who have discomfort with external retention, that can be halved.

The safest procedure, in my opinion, is to take the Gayatri mantra as one unit, because the Gayatri mantra has twenty-four syllables. That is about the minimum vital capacity of every adult individual. So, you inhale for one quick repetition

of Gayatri mantra, retain for one, exhale for two and retain out for one. If you do not have the proper vital capacity, because you smoke a lot, live in closed rooms without fresh air, etc., you can use a smaller mantra such as *Om Namah Shivaya* and make two repetitions one unit.

When you have improved your habits, and therefore your vital capacity, you can increase the number of repetitions of the mantra for each unit. If, after a few years, you can inhale three Gayatri mantras and exhale six Gayatri mantras, what a wonderful vital capacity you will have. Therefore, different teachers are teaching different ratios. It is perfectly alright and it is according to the standard and class of student.

Please advise us how we can control the sex force in family life while doing sadhana in this busy and tempting country.

According to *Manu Smriti*, *Yoga Vasishtha* and many other scriptures, the sexual relationship between the two opposite poles of energy Shiva and Shakti is not detrimental to spiritual progress. If you do not conduct that relationship in accordance with the norms of society, it could disturb society but not your spiritual life; I am sure about it.

In many religions, the sexual relationship between Shiva and Shakti, the two poles of energy (man, the positive force, and woman, the negative force) is considered a sin, a bad work. I cannot accept this. It is not. It is a dharma. It is necessary for your spiritual evolution. It is necessary for disposing of the toxins of emotional, hormonal, psychological and physiological life.

There are many puritans who think that sexual relationships are a sin, and many of them today are living in mental hospitals. Nobody should try to challenge the laws of nature. Manu says very clearly, "There is no fault in eating meat, no fault in drinking, no fault in cohabitation; it is the natural urge in humans and all related beings, but if you can renounce them, the rewards will be greater."

This is the concept by which we should understand the relationship between the two poles of energy, Shiva and Shakti.

It is with this view that they are brought together. They can meet anywhere. It is not necessary that they should be together, but in order to maintain social sanity, in order to maintain social hygiene, it is best if they live together. They should also make certain ideal divine promises and commitments to each other, not because they have to foster progeny, not because they have to enjoy each other, but because it is through this path that they will get rid of the karma, the samskaras, and develop vairagya, jnana and bhakti.

Tantra says that sexual interaction can have three purposes according to the quality of your life. As an animal, procreation; as an ordinary person, pleasure; and as a sadhaka, samadhi. The same act can be directed by changing the quality of your attitude in life. You can live sexual life as an animal just by continuing to procreate, or you can live it as an ordinary person for pleasure, as most of you are doing now. But it is best if you learn how to direct and channel your sexual activities towards your spiritual performance. For that, you will need to have a guru. It is not possible for me to say everything in this meeting, which is so open and not intimate.

How can we awaken the love and devotion in our heart for God in the quickest way?

Oh, very difficult. I don't know. Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, said to Krishna, after the Mahabharata war came to an end and Krishna was returning to Dwarika, "It was better when we had all the problems and difficulties, because you were with us. Now that we have all the wealth and are kings and emperors, we are losing you."

Increasing the *bhakti* and *prem*, devotion and love, is not easy, because you want to have your cake and eat it too. In one way, you want wealth, comfort, no suffering, and on the other hand, you want bhakti and prem. For prem you have to make a sacrifice. Love is not that easy. Everybody can say, "I love God." Every husband can say, "I love my wife." Every wife can say, "I love my husband." Parents can say, "I love my children." That's not love; that's infatuation.

Once you really love God or your child or your wife or husband, nothing can destroy it because love is imperishable and immortal. Whether your wife misbehaves or your husband misbehaves, nothing can destroy the love. Love is not an expression of the intellect, it is not an expression of emotion, it is not an expression of a proper relationship. It is an expression of man's deep-rooted divinity.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say, "Just as you pine for life, in the same way you should pine for bhakti." Once he was travelling by boat and someone asked him this same question. He pushed the man in the river. The man shouted, "Help, I am dying!" Ramakrishna said, "When you have the same desire for God as you now have for life, then you will know what bhakti is." He said later, "All the love which couples have for each other, all the love that parents have for their children, the total has to be channelled."

So, bhakti is very difficult, but worship is easy. Going to the temple and church is the easiest thing you can do. Ringing the bells, doing arati, singing hymns and kirtan are simple. This is ritualistic devotion. But all the other bhakti about which I have been talking, *parabhakti*, cannot be practised through the senses or the mind or books. It is just an explosion, when your divinity is at the point of maturity.

The central idea of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the renouncing of desires. Is tantric sadhana consistent with the *Gita*'s teachings?

The central theme of the *Bhagavad Gita* is not renunciation of desires. In the second chapter, it is said, "Your business is to perform karma, but the results accruing from karma are not your business." That is one central theme of *Gita*.

The second important theme of the *Gita* is in the eighteenth chapter, almost at the end: "Don't worry, I'll help you. I'll make you free from all the impurities of life. Just come and take shelter in me." This means, abandon the dharma of prakriti, the dharma of the indriyas, the eyes, the ears, the mind, the heart, the properties of the senses, mind, buddhi,

















emotions – just leave them, forget everything, and fix your mind on the Lord inside you. Tantra has the same theme.

There is a collection of prayers in tantra. In one of them there is the following: “Mother, I don’t know mantra, I don’t practise yantra, I don’t know how to pray, I don’t know how to invoke you, I don’t know how to meditate on you and I don’t know what your glory is. But I know that if I follow you, all my agonies will be redeemed.” There are more lines like this, and then it concludes with, “No, I don’t have to do anything.”

This is the tantric view – I don’t have to do anything. I have come and I am able to touch your feet. I’m pure. The philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* is completely identical to the philosophy of tantra, where if you surrender totally to Shakti, it does not matter who you are, whether you are a brahmin, a shudra, an American, an Indian, a Muslim, a Christian or a Hindu – it makes no difference.



17

The Eightfold Path

The Ojai Foundation, Ojai, California, 6 September 1982.

I have a vision about the integration of yoga into our present life. Although yoga is said to have been practised in the mountains, in solitude, by recluses and sannyasins, I somehow feel that must have been some time later, and not when yoga was discovered and was organized by the wise people. From what yoga tells us and the way it shows us, it appears to be for those people who were greatly distracted, restless and emotionally imbalanced. Hence, I don't think yoga was realized by a calm culture in a peaceful environment.

Doctors abound on the earth because there are many diseases. Had there been no diseases, there would be no doctors. The police force is there because there are so many thieves, bandits and criminals. Had there been no thieves, bandits and criminals, do you think there would be Scotland Yard and so many other police organizations? Similarly, the philosophy of yoga suggests a very distracted, restless, ambitious and broken culture.

Look at the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, or the *Bhakti Yoga Sutras* of Narada and Shandilya, or the *Jnana Yoga Sutras* of Maharishi Badarayana, or the *Samkhya Sutras* of the *Bhagavad Gita* depicting and talking about karma yoga. They clearly indicate that the people to whom yoga was addressed were not necessarily wise and saintly people. Therefore, to say

that yoga is a culture of a monastic civilization, or that it is a culture of mountains and monasteries is utterly wrong. Why do monks need yoga? I don't need it. I have no tensions, no stresses, no strains. I can move out anytime, anywhere. And even if something happens to me, nobody loses, because I am just one. I have no wife, no family, no children, no society, no religion, no culture.

However, in our society, if one person suffers from mental or physical problems, the whole society around him suffers too. So, the first conclusion that I have drawn is that yoga is for people who are living amidst agony and facing mental or physical breakdowns. This is exactly the theme of the *Bhagavad Gita*, whose first chapter is entitled 'The Yoga of Nervous Depression' or nervous breakdown.

Calming the disturbed mind

Yoga begins when the mind is unbalanced and when you lack total control over yourself, but when at the same time, you are trying to balance yourself. It is with this sense and with this background that I'll be talking to you a little about the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali.

Sage Patanjali was a great scholar and rishi, who was contemporary with Lord Buddha about 2,500 years ago. There were other contemporaries of Buddha who were also very good, but we are not concerned with them at the moment. Sage Patanjali codified raja yoga in the form of aphorisms called sutras. The word *sutra* in Sanskrit means 'thread', and just as one thread binds the 108 beads of a *mala* (rosary), in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, there is a central theme which binds all the various ideas together.

Before the advent of Sage Patanjali, in India a philosophy was already in existence by which Buddha and Buddhist philosophy were greatly influenced. This philosophical branch, which is one of the six systems of Indian philosophy, is known as the Samkhya doctrine.

In Samkhya, they have explained what the mind is and what its components are, what consciousness and

matter are, and the thing which is responsible for the gathering of momentum of matter in the form of creation. Samkhya deals with consciousness and the different stages of consciousness, starting from the rudimentary state which is present in minerals, then vegetables, animals and man. This consciousness is called *chitta*.

Chitta seems to be manifesting through matter in various stages. At one stage, this chitta is only existence and there is no movement, whereas in us this chitta has patterns which are called vrittis. These vrittis are the patterns of consciousness and it is through the chitta, in combination with the vritti, that knowledge and experience take place. For instance, you are aware of my presence now and I am aware of your presence now, in one particular way. This is one of those patterns of your consciousness and it is called objective cognition. Similarly, you cognize a flower – smell, sight, touch, etc. These objective forms of cognition are one quality of the chitta.

In all, there are five of these patterns through which the mind acquires knowledge, and they are known in yoga as the five vrittis. *Vritti* means ‘pattern’, which comes from the word *vritta*, a circle. If you throw a pebble in a pond, ripples are formed in a concentric circular pattern and they go on moving outward. This is how the patterns move and take place within the mind. The five vrittis are: (i) objective awareness, (ii) subjective awareness, (iii) illusory awareness, (iv) past awareness and (v) absence of awareness.

These five patterns are important because Sage Patanjali has said, “Yoga is a process by which you block these patterns.” This means that the practices of yoga which we do, such as asanas, pranayama, meditation, should eliminate the fivefold vrittis from the mind. Then, when the objective awareness, subjective awareness, illusory awareness, past awareness and absence of awareness are removed, an experience takes place which is free from limitations, and that experience is known as *kaivalya*.

The word *kaivalya* is derived from the word *kevala*, which means ‘only’ or ‘absolute’, which is an indication of

nonduality. When all the vrittis are removed, only I remain, the self, the purusha, the consciousness, the experiencer. I want to emphasize that the experiencer is not the mind. The experiencer is *purusha*. You may call it self; you can call it consciousness; you may call it inner being; you may call it by any name that you like, because it has no name. That purusha experiences the duality, multiplicity, the variety of matter through the mind, and this mind is a reflector. The self, therefore, is experiencing matter through the reflector, which is called chitta vritti.

Therefore, at the very outset of the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, it says, *Yoga chitta vritti nirodhah* “Yoga is chitta vritti blocking”. You remove the objective awareness, the subjective awareness, the illusory awareness, the past awareness and the unconsciousness, and when all these five are removed, then the self experiences itself. It does not experience anything else. That state is called kaivalya, and you can just imagine how difficult it is.

Consistency and desirelessness

The point is how to remove, how to eliminate these patterns and with what? Because the whole game is taking place between one area of the mind and another area of the mind. Who is removing? The mind is removing. That is a problem which is so difficult that if you do not tackle it properly, a split occurs in the mind between one vritti of the mind and another.

Sage Patanjali has dealt with this topic very carefully, so that by the time you come to the point of blocking the flow of objective consciousness, etc., you do it smoothly and you will not become schizophrenic. He is very careful about it, and precisely for that reason he does not prescribe meditation at the outset.

Sage Patanjali says that these vrittis can be removed in two ways: one, *abhyasa* and two, *vairagya*. These are the two ways which have to be employed if you want a free, safe passage to higher experience. *Abhyasa* means regular, constant, relentless,

repeated practice. It does not mean practising just anytime you are inspired, such as when you read a book by this swami or by that Gururji today. The practice must be completely regular.

Vairagya means desirelessness, the capacity to control the cravings for those experiences which you have already had, or have heard about or even thought about. However, *vairagya* cannot be practised by suppression. It has to be practised by a process of systematic and greater training. For example, if you want to sleep less, you don't suddenly cut down the hours of your sleep from tonight.

Once, when I was in the ashram of my guru, it just came to my mind, "Let me see what happens if I don't sleep for days and nights." So I made a program by which I eliminated five minutes from my nightly sleep each month. It was so gradual that I never knew I was sleeping less, but in five years I was having only fifteen minutes of sleep per night. Nothing happened to me. I didn't go insane. I was very well and my energy was normal. However, if I had tried to suppress the necessity of sleep at the outset, I would have gone to the mental hospital.

Yamas and niyamas

Self-control cannot be accomplished overnight, but it has to be accomplished. It doesn't mean that from today you don't eat this, don't do that, don't think this, etc. That is puritanism, and there is a difference between puritanism and a system of self-control in yoga. We give years to the aspirant. It doesn't matter if you can't do this now. It doesn't matter if it is twenty years, but during that period there are certain psychological, emotional and actual behaviours that have to be properly organized and developed. They are called *yamas* and *niyamas*.

The *yamas* and *niyamas*, methods of self-control and self-discipline, in recent years have received a lot of intellectual attacks, not only from the psychologists, but also from the swamis themselves, because they equate them with religious

practices. By their very nature they appear to be religious, but the method by which we accomplish them is not religious, it is yogic.

The yoga method of self-control is a method by which we recognize the mind as a tool and make our mind our friend. It has to be a friendly mind; it should cooperate because when there is no cooperation, there is separation, suppression and explosion. That is why many people who practise these things wrongly do not develop anything.

The yamas deal with improving our social interaction and interpersonal relationships. There are five:

1. *Ahimsa*: non-violence towards all beings, whether human or animal. Remember that this can mean verbal violence as well as physical, or even a glance.
2. *Satya*: truthfulness
3. *Asteya*: honesty, non-stealing
4. *Brahmacharya*: continence
5. *Aparigraha*: non-possessiveness, giving up the tendency to accumulate objects of utility and pleasure.

The niyamas are ways of personal improvement and there are five of these also:

1. *Shaucha*: cleanliness, external (regular bathing, clean surroundings, etc.) and internal (the hatha yoga shatkarmas)
2. *Santosh*: contentment
3. *Tapas*: austerity
4. *Swadhyaya*: self-observation
5. *Ishwara pranidhana*: surrender to the Cosmic will.

When you practise yama and niyama, you have to practise them very carefully, and how is that? I can't really explain, but I can think of an example. In the elementary classes of science, I learned a process called crystallization. In a strong sugar solution, you just hang a crystal of sugar. Then, from the solution, the sugar that is mixed in slowly collects around the crystal and it grows and grows. The practice of yama and niyama should be accomplished through this same process of crystallization.

Don't say, "I am not going to speak lies to anyone at any time, from today, at any cost." Just say, "I am not going to speak lies unnecessarily." That is called the minimum program. It is the crystal you are hanging, and gradually, step by step, the truthfulness will automatically gather around the crystal until you have formed the big crystal called satya.

Yama and niyama, therefore, must be practised by a clear process of crystallization with a minimum program. And when you try to practise the minimum program, it has to be convenient. You don't have to struggle, you don't have to fight with yourself, you don't have to be tense. Do it conveniently, comfortably, without tension, with absolute relaxation. And if you can't practise them with peace and with relaxation, please do not practise them. It will be better. However, if you want to grow spiritually, you must practise them.

Asana and pranayama

The third limb of Sage Patanjali's system is called asana. *Asana* means 'posture'. According to Sage Patanjali, these asanas should be steady and comfortable. The two words he used are *sthiram*, which means 'immobile', and *sukham*, 'comfortable'. So the postures must first of all be comfortable and then we must stay perfectly still.

The fourth limb of the *Yoga Sutras* is *pranayama*, which is the ability to control the breathing. I can't go into detail about all of these, of course, or I will not be able to get back to Los Angeles.

Going within

The fifth limb is *pratyahara*, which is the process of withdrawing the mind from the objects of sense experience. These are the external objects and the interior objects. What are the internal objects? They are the manifestation of our *samskaras*, which are the mental impressions we have collected from our society and from our previous life. They are the karma, the mental archetypes, and there are millions and trillions of them. They have to come out, step by step, in the form of experience.

What I mean to say is that when you have these experiences, please do not think that you are somewhere on the mountain, and do not try to bypass these practices which are necessary and which are enjoined. Then, at the end of pratyahara practice, such as nada yoga, trataka, mantra japa, Om chanting, antar mouna, or even drugs, you have the experience related to the perfection of pratyahara.

The psychic symbol

When pratyahara becomes complete, then for a moment you feel you have no mind – everything has become completely silent. You are very happy at that time and you give up your practices because you are under the wrong impression that you have gone to *kaivalya* or the higher state. No. Wherever there is complete blankness in the mind, when the mind does not apparently function, then at that time you must bring a symbol into your awareness.

The symbol could be fire, the sun, the moon, guru, a flower or a star; it could be one static substance. At that point, everybody must have a symbol and visualize it. Even if you haven't been a visionary, even if you have been very poor at visualizing things, at the point when the senses and the mind have been completely cut off, you can easily visualize the symbol in your mid-eyebrow centre and go on seeing it.

With that, your sadhana is finished; your personal efforts are finished. Beyond that, you can't do anything. After this sixth stage, *dharana* (concentration), frankly speaking, you don't have to make any effort from your side or think what to do. Everything will depend upon the quality of your preparation in steps one, two, three, four and five. And what happens in *dhyana*? And what happens in *samadhi*? It is not at all necessary to discuss that here. It will all be tall talk. Of course, if you want to know, please read the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali. He talks about *dhyana* (meditation) and he talks about *samadhi*.

The eightfold yoga known as *raja yoga* is important, because it gives a codified system of practices. It does take

some time. I think if you are regular and sincere, it will take ten or twelve years. I don't think that it is possible in six months. You may believe it is, but I beg to differ; it is a matter of time.

Of course, ten or twelve years is nothing. It takes that long to become a doctor. Sometimes it takes a lifetime to earn a little fortune; to own your own flat or house takes thirty or forty years, and sometimes it takes eighty years to get just a little common sense. If we have to be told that to experience our real nature we should allow some time, I think it is not a matter of great disappointment.

What are the rewards of yoga? Three rewards are in my mind: (i) creative intelligence, (ii) freedom from the threefold afflictions caused by body, mind and nature, (iii) first-hand knowledge about the reality which is behind this appearance. Personal, first-hand knowledge is important. You can't get it from a book, a teacher or even a guru. It must be personal experience. The reality behind the appearance may be God, it may be Purusha, it may be nothing, it may be anything, but you must have personal knowledge of it.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Please discuss the practice of yoga nidra. What preparations are necessary in order to practise this wisely?

Yoga nidra is a practice which has been developed from the tantric rituals. In tantric rituals there are practices where you name each and every part of the body and thereby you relax the whole system. Of course, in Sanskrit, it is written and spoken differently, so I translated the whole practice into English. The yoga nidra practice is designed to train your subconscious faculties, thereby integrating willpower, positive thinking and other aspects of knowledge into it.

No preparation is necessary for yoga nidra because there is no risk involved. It is the easiest of all the practices. Yoga nidra is not a practice in concentration. You just have to keep on listening to the instructions given to you, either by

your teacher or by a tape recorder. The only condition in the process is that you should not sleep.

What is the science behind alternate breathing?

We have two nostrils, and these two nostrils are connected with *ida* and *pingala* nadis. *Ida nadi* represents the mental force, and *pingala nadi* represents the pranic force. These two forces are connected with the two hemispheres of the brain. The right nostril and the left nostril do not flow freely all the time. There is a cycle, and this rhythm of the breath is explained in the science of *swara yoga*, which deals with the behaviour of the breath in the nostrils. How long does one nostril flow more freely than the other, and on which day, and at which time?

The alternate flow of breath in each nostril is controlled by the lunar cycle. Thus on the first, second and third days of the new moon, from the time of sunrise, the left nostril flows more freely than the right, for one hour and twenty minutes, and then the right one flows for the next one hour and twenty minutes, and so on. On the fourth, fifth and sixth days after the new moon, at the time of sunrise, the right nostril flows for the first one hour and twenty minutes, then the left for the next one hour and twenty minutes, etc.

This is explained in detail in an ancient book called *Shiva Swarodaya*, which means 'the emerging of the flow of breath' (the natural breath in Sanskrit is known as *swara*), which has been translated by various people into English. I have been working on it, with the help of some of my disciples in Munger and the book is now complete. We have made a chart of the behaviour of both the breaths, left and right, of many swamis and many aspirants coming to Munger, for over a period of six months, and we have come to a conclusion about the timings of the rising of the breath on every day during the lunar cycle.

This alternate cycle of the breath is also connected with the function of the two hemispheres of the brain. Thus, when there is more activity in the left nostril, it has been seen that

there is more activity in the right hemisphere of the brain. Similarly, when there is more activity in the right nostril, there is more activity in the left hemisphere of the brain. Hence, when you practise alternate nostril breathing, you are bringing both the hemispheres of the brain into balanced operation.

This supports the claim in the old yoga shastras that one of the important purposes of practising pranayama is to awaken sushumna. Awakening of sushumna means that ida and pingala are balanced, and that there is an equal and free flow of the breath in both nostrils. It is at this time that the whole brain is active and both hemispheres are balanced.

What are the koshas, and is it possible to integrate the five koshas in order to direct one's potential?

First, I will have to explain what is meant by the koshas. It will be a little difficult. *Kosha* literally means 'sheath'. There are five koshas:

1. *Annamaya kosha*: physical or food sheath
2. *Pranamaya kosha*: pranic or bioplasmic sheath
3. *Manomaya kosha*: sheath of the mind
4. *Vijnanamaya kosha*: psychic sheath
5. *Anandamaya kosha*: blissful sheath.

These five koshas correspond to five layers of consciousness, which can also be classified under the three headings, gross, subtle and causal.

1. Physical consciousness – gross
2. Pranic consciousness (relating to the physical body)
3. Mental consciousness – subtle
4. Psychic consciousness (relating to the astral body)
5. Unconsciousness – causal (relating to the causal body)

When awakening of kundalini takes place in mooladhara chakra, the series of experiences which you undergo are related to these five koshas. At the time of the awakening of kundalini, each and every layer, each and every kosha, is transformed in the shape of experience. The physical, the

pranic, the mental, the psychic and the causal layers are all transformed, and this is experienced by us in the form of spiritual experiences.

What is the technique for functioning consciously in the causal body?

For most people it is difficult, because from the very beginning yoga aspirants confuse meditation with relaxation. That is why when we are conscious, we are conscious, and when we are in the subconscious, we are partly conscious, but the moment we come into the causal body, we become unaware of everything.

If you want to remain aware, even in the causal state of consciousness, then you have to understand just one thing – withdraw the mind from objective perception to internal perception, without diminishing the height of mental consciousness. The same mind through which I visualize this room is the same awareness which, without any change, without any alteration, should visualize the self.

Therefore, when you are practising meditation, do not try to hypnotize your mind. Do not try to forget the external, objective universe. Do not try – I am using the words – it may happen, but you should not try. When you practise meditation on any object, your first attempt is to forget sound, to forget the thoughts, to forget the mental distractions, and gradually you pass through a process of hypnosis. Most people practise auto-hypnotism instead of yoga, and there comes a moment when they fall asleep.

Once I was in Bombay about twenty years ago, and a doctor wanted to examine my state in meditation. He was amazed and he said, “No alpha waves!” He had read the books by many Americans who were doing biofeedback research, and were saying that in meditation you are supposed to show alpha waves. That means that his instruments showed that I was awake. But I was not awake. My brain was alert; it was totally alert, as it is now, but it was not perceiving the outside objects. It was perceiving something inside. I had not relaxed it; it is not necessary to relax.

Do you need relaxation to see this tape-recorder? Do you need relaxation to identify a flower or a fruit? Then why do you need relaxation to see the spirit inside? You come out every morning from your sleep and every night you go back to sleep automatically. Similarly, in meditation you should be able to come out and go in with the same mind.

If you want to remain aware in the causal body, then you must practise this sleepless state. When you are dreaming, you must know that you are dreaming. When you are thinking, you must know that you are thinking. If you are not thinking, then you must know that you are not thinking. It is not necessary that you stop thinking, but it is necessary that you know that you are thinking. If there are disturbances of mind, then you must know that you have disturbances. If you have wild thoughts and passions in the mind, then you must calmly know that there are wild passions and thoughts in the mind. Just as you see a lion in a cage at the zoo, you must see your thoughts.

There is nothing to fear, whether good or bad, holy or unholy thoughts, you must be able to see them. And when you are sleeping, you must watch how you are sleeping, and you must be able to sleep and you must be able to hear what people are saying. You must be able to sleep, and you must be able to hear your own snoring. This is called 'the witnessing self', the seer, and you must awaken that seer, rather than hypnotizing him by forceful means employed in the name of yoga.



18

Relationship between Yoga and Religion

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The word yoga means ‘union’ and the word religion also means ‘union’, and the ultimate purpose of yoga is to merge the individual consciousness with the Universal Consciousness. In India in particular and in Asia in general, religion was practised in order to achieve the highest quality of spiritual experience, but the saints and the sages found that the methods as instructed by religions were going no further than mere rituals, rites and ceremonies. The practices, which were in the form of worship, propitiation, incantation and observances of ceremonies, had become more mechanical repetitions than real experiences.

Furthermore, if the religion you practise cannot give you the actual inner experience, an experience which should be beyond the senses, mind and intellect, then it alone cannot justify the purpose of its existence. If your religion is only a pastime or a belief of certain tenets, then it is much better to just lead an ordinary life. The purpose of every religion is, and should be, to promote and create an experience which is supramental.

Tantra

When the saints and sages of Asia found that the religious ceremonies could not transform the quality of the individual

and his consciousness, they developed a practical system of philosophy which came to be known as tantra. They named that way of life tantra because through certain practices, either integrated with religion or apart from religion, the person is able to expand the area of human experience, and after that the energy within the individual is released.

The objective experience which we have through our senses, the mind, intellect and emotions belongs to the regular nature and property of the mind. The mind can perceive an object through the eyes, and can hear sound through the ears, and it can experience the world through its other sensory channels, but it cannot experience a form, a sound or a smell beyond the limitations of those senses. If that happens, you would know that it is because the mind has broken through its usual barriers and has expanded. Hence, yoga came to be integrated into the religions in order to enrich the quality of the experiences of the worshipper in this way.

We know that although you may go to a sanctum sanctorum for decades, you may still not evolve mentally and spiritually. This is not just an opinion, it is a reality. Of course, when you involve yourself in a particular religious worship, you develop a lot of beliefs, ideals and maybe even blind superstitions and fanatical attitudes. What is in the book becomes final for you, and you can't go beyond those particular scriptures.

I do not challenge the validity of the scriptures, but experience is much more important than a scripture. In India, scriptures are venerated; the proclamations made by the gurus, saints and sages are accepted, but at the same time an experience created by an expanded state of mind is considered to be final and ultimate. Those people who have had an inner experience of the reality and have experienced the supramental state are highly revered.

Thus, the whole tantric system was gradually developed for different types of people. This was necessary because people do not all belong to one point of evolution. Though millions of people may follow one religion, they are all different, depending on the category of their consciousness. Therefore,

one religion, if it is not properly integrated with a particular system, cannot meet the spiritual demands of everybody.

Tantric methods

In the secular educational system you have various classes: kindergarten, primary, high school, college, university, postgraduate, etc., in order to fulfil the intellectual demands of different individuals. The same variety of opportunity obviously needed to be offered in spiritual life and in religious life. Therefore, the tantric system formulated many methods for different types of people: those with composed minds, with dynamic, ambitious minds, those with a passive nature, those with an active, aggressive nature, lazy people, etc. These practices came to be known as yoga.

When the sages formulated the practices of yoga, however, they were confronted with a practical problem. Some of them wanted to integrate *dhyana yoga*, meditation, into the religious practices, but they found that, even though the person could be taught the practices of concentration and could be led to a deeper experience, the experiences were faulty – the explosion of the subconscious mind came in the way of individual evolution.

Then they decided that before teaching him meditation, they would teach him something by which he would be able to purify the dross in the subconscious mind. Hence, they developed all the various practices of yoga under the four categories: karma yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga, and their various sub-groups: laya yoga, mantra yoga, hatha yoga, nada yoga, swara yoga, siddha yoga, kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, etc.

These yogas were designed in such a way that they could facilitate the inner spiritual experience. For example, usually when a person is practising his ceremonies, or his prayers, or is reading the scriptures, he does it without one-pointedness of mind. He cannot force the powers of his mind, so he is unable to go into the depths of the statements; he reads them intellectually.

There is one verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* which shows how you can misunderstand a religious statement if you don't have inner experience: "During that which is night for all the living beings, the yogi keeps awake, and while the living beings are awake, that is the night of the yogi." Taken in its most superficial sense, it seems to say that yogis should sleep all day and stay awake all night, but it doesn't mean that at all. The deeper meaning becomes clear to us only when we confront a rich experience which takes place during the depths of meditation. Then we realize that 'day' means 'objective awareness', when you are aware of the ordinary sense objects, mental perceptions and cognitions, and 'night' means 'the darkness within'.

Homogeneous expression

It is not only the religious practices which are improved and expanded. The awareness dawns that it is the quality of our whole life which needs to be improved. Every activity, every thought, every emotion, passion and desire, from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn, including sleep, must be transformed, so that everything we express becomes a part of our total and homogeneous worship.

Before its integration with yoga, religion was compartmental, and it is still so now in many countries and religions. But the yogis said, "No, religion can't be just one aspect of life; it must be total. Each and every expression of the person's mind, senses, intellect, ego and subconscious must become a part of his worship." For this purpose, the *Bhagavad Gita* has given the philosophy of karma yoga by which we eliminate the *samskaras* of the mind and avoid collecting more of the mental dross from our day-to-day interactions.

How can a mind laden with distracting impressions practise religion? With a frustrated mind are you worshipping? With a distracted mind are you trying to understand the *Gita* or the Bible? With a dissipated mind are you trying to pray? Nothing is happening because the expression is mutilated; it is not complete; it is not powerful. Just as the rays of the sun are powerful but cannot burn even a piece of paper unless

they are focused with a magnifying glass, so it is also with the power of bringing the dissipations of the mind into a single area of focus.

Similarly, if the mind is not functioning properly on account of your improper, unscientific, disturbing interactions with life, your religious practices will yield no result, and in order to improve the quality of your interactions with life, yoga has to come into it – karma yoga.

The vision

Imbalance in the physiological processes will always distort the quality of the religious experience. The two poles of energy in the body, the mind and the prana, ida and pingala, must be balanced, and this is done by hatha yoga, asanas and pranayamas. As a result of this balance, your worship will become tranquil and one-pointed. Yoga is very clear about it and nobody should doubt it.

When ida flows, the mind is active; when pingala flows, the prana is active. When pingala nadi is flowing, that is, when the breath is predominantly entering through the right nostril, no matter how much you try to read your scriptures, your mind will be somewhere else, because, when pingala nadi flows, the rhythms, the humours in the physical body are in a disturbed state. Therefore, when you are practising your religion, you must make sure that ida and pingala are balanced, that mind and prana are in equilibrium. At that time, even without making the least effort, your mind becomes tranquil and equipoised.

Finally, the Shakti cult, which is the principal mainstream of tantra, has a beautiful system of *pooja*, worship. One is Devi pooja, the other, Shiva pooja. They are arranged so that there is a place where you practise pranayama. It is called *prana shuddhi*, purification of prana. There is one place in the worship where you practise yoga nidra while sitting and touching apparent parts of the body. They also practise mantra nyasa and other nyasas, which are the original practices of yoga nidra. In their poojas they also use mudras. There are

sixty-four in number. In yoga there are also mudras, such as yoni mudra, chin mudra, shambhavi mudra, nasikagra mudra (agochari mudra), etc., which are used to create a total unification of the forces of the body, mind and spirit.

With the integration of yoga, these religions have contributed to deep and rich spiritual experiences which brought light to man. What was that? The experiences that convince us that something does exist beyond the body and mind and consciousness, and that is called the higher spirit, *Ishwara, Atma*.

Thousands of people have descended in India who have not only known God, or higher forces, or afterlife through books, but who have experienced it by breaking the limitations and boundaries of the mind. When the mind transcends the ordinary mind, when the senses are completely withdrawn, like the tortoise withdraws its limbs, and when the objective perception is withdrawn completely, and finally the ego is also eliminated, it is at that time that the experiences related to the infinite come to our vision.

What do we call it? Darshan. That is the ultimate aim of all the Eastern religions – the perception of a separate reality, the reality behind these appearances. Millions and millions of people throughout thousands of years have just been striving for darshan. People take sannyasa; they visit sanctum sanctorum; they go to gurus and take mantra initiation; every morning they sit down in their family temple corner and meditate on this deity or that deity. What for? They have just one vision in mind. Of course, some may have other aims also; some may want help in their distress, others, to have their wishes fulfilled, more money, more children, etc. However, apart from that, most people have one wish deep in their minds: to have the realization or the vision of that reality which lives beyond everything.

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Systems of Tantra Yoga

East-West Cultural Centre, Los Angeles, California, 7 September 1982.

There is a state of experience where the normal mind can function beyond its usual limits, where the senses and sense experiences do not act at all. This is an important milestone, not only in the practice of tantra and of yoga, but also in the practice of religion. There is a reality behind this appearance, and that reality has to be experienced.

However, you cannot have the higher experience without effecting the necessary transformation in the structure of consciousness or the mind. Usually, the mind is dependent on the senses and so it experiences objects through the medium of the senses, called the *indriyas* in Sanskrit. The question therefore is can the mind have experience independently, without bringing the senses into the picture? Can you see without eyes; can you hear without ears?

Tantra replies positively that it is possible for one to experience the things beyond the range of the senses, if you can effect the necessary transformation in the quality of consciousness. How do we effect this change? That is the subject matter of yoga and it is the subject matter of tantra.

Expand and liberate

The practices of yoga form a part of tantra. Yoga and tantra are not different, although on account of our complexes,

many times we say we believe in yoga and we teach yoga. But if you ask, “Do you teach tantra?” and we say, “No, I don’t teach tantra,” that would be an indication of total ignorance about the subject matter.

The etymology of the word *tantra* is ‘expansion of mind and liberation of energy’. The most important way in which this is done in the system of tantra is by meditation. Meditation is known as *dhyana*, and in raja yoga, dhyana is the seventh step. However, in tantra, meditation continues right from the beginning.

In raja yoga it is said, “Whenever your mind gets distracted from the object of meditation, bring it back to the point of meditation,” whereas in tantra it is said, “Whichever way your mind goes, follow it; do not pull the mind.” If you think of a flower, visualize it; if the idea of a snake comes into your mind, visualize that; if the idea of a skull comes into your mind, visualize that; if there is a happy memory or unhappy memory, visualize everything.

Do not interfere with the mind because in tantra the mind is not a sinner; it is not Satan; it is not a devil; it is not the source of all mischief. In tantra, the mind is the vehicle, it is the tool, and therefore, you must utilize this tool properly.

The three bases

For handling the mind, tantra contains three bases for meditation. One base is mantra, the second is yantra and third is mandala. These three bases are used, but not to put the mind into concentration. This is a very important point. Mantra, yantra and mandala are used to expose the mind, to purge the samskaras, to see the total mind – the mind at the top, the mind at the bottom, the mind which is good or which is bad, and the latent impressions, the infinity of archetypes, which usually remain suppressed and subdued, in most cases for the whole of our lives.

Psychologists have been telling us that the mind is like an iceberg, a part of which you can see and the rest of which you cannot. This is very true. You know quite a few feelings; you

know quite a few fears, etc., but you don't know the rest of the mind. Feelings, emotions, passions, love, hatred, memory are not the total content of the mind. They are just a fraction of the total content. Therefore, we have to come to know our samskaras, and these samskaras have to be objectified, they should not be left subdued and suppressed.

If you are suffering from constipation, you take a laxative and eliminate the problem. You may have difficulty and discomfort while it is passing, but then you feel much better. This is similar to the purpose of mantra, yantra and mandala. They purge the contents of the mind which have been obstructing the inner vision, which have been responsible for its distractions, its obsessions and neuroses, its faulty conceptions, faulty knowledge and erroneous outlook.

Mantra is the mildest of the bases of tantra meditation. What is mantra and what is it not? Mantra is not a holy name or a divine sound. If you think so, that is alright, but literally the word *mantra* means 'by contemplating upon which the mind is freed from obsessions'. The mantra must be repeated, and while you are repeating the mantra, you face more and more distractions and oscillations of mind, and hosts of thoughts can be seen. You just witness them. From this, you can understand that mantra is a means to purify one realm of consciousness.

Yantras are geometrical figures and there are many of them. I have been collecting yantras for the last twenty years and have a lot of them. Yantras influence the mind, which absorbs them and then expresses itself – a very powerful means of exploding the deeper contents of the mind. Some very successful experiments have already been done on the effects of yantras, and much more will be heard about them in the future.

Mandalas are the idols, images, objects and statues on which people concentrate. Of course, many religions do not agree with these, but I think that mandalas really have nothing to do with worshipping God. Actually, when you expose your mind on the basis of these mandalas, your consciousness is objectified, and this is a very important point – the aim of tantric meditation.

Inner transformation

Many times people say to me, “I’m having a lot of experiences.” I say, “What are you having?” They say, “Oh, when I sit in meditation, I can see flowers, forests, oceans, rivers and moon.” I say, “Okay.” Then they say, “Well, Swamiji, will you tell me what that means?” I say, “Well, it doesn’t mean anything. It only means that your consciousness is in a process of transformation.”

The consciousness is in a process of transformation, and as the transformation is going on, the experiences of the mind become different from objective experiences. You can see a flower in a garden; that is an objective experience. But when you can visualize that flower in your mind (I’m using the word ‘visualize’ not just ‘think’) almost as clearly as it is there in your garden, that is the transformation of the mind that has happened.

Many people can visualize and many cannot. This capacity for visualization becomes more and more intense. Eventually, it develops to the extent that your consciousness assumes the shape of the object. This is then an independent status of your mind.

In tantric meditation, when through mantra, yantra or mandala, the mind is completely cleansed of the dross of avidya and of its limitations, then consciousness becomes dynamic, and this dynamic consciousness can project itself on any object. Here you must remember that when I am talking about the mind and consciousness, I do not mean them as psychological stuff. I mean mind and consciousness as an aspect of energy – shakti.

Matter and energy are two forms of each other, in the same way that energy is matter and matter is energy, but they are different in their manifestations. Mind is also energy, and it has a separate existence from this body and brain. The mind is a separate reality. It can be objectified, it can be superimposed and it can be seen in any form. This is known as independent reality.

Psychic perception

In India, this happening is known as *darshan*, which means 'to see'. The Indians will say, "I want to have darshan of Rama," or "I want to have darshan of my guru," or "I want to have darshan of Lord Shiva." And you may say, "I want to have darshan of Christ," or "I want to have darshan of Mohammed or Moses," or "I want to have darshan of Buddha or Guruji."

Ordinarily, I am able to see you, but this process of seeing is objective perception for which the mind has to depend on the eyes and the previous knowledge that you are a man and not an animal. The mind has to depend on certain resources, certain evidence to see; it cannot perceive you independently. However, it is possible to develop it so that I can see you, or you can see me in the flesh and blood, at any place, regardless of geographical distance. That is darshan, and it is the ultimate purpose of tantric meditation.

The purpose of ordinary meditation may be anything. I do not voice any opinion about that. The purpose of meditation may be peace of mind and tranquillity. You may not be getting sleep in the night and I may say, "Please meditate and you'll get good sleep." Or you may be suffering from hypertension, so I ask you to meditate and your blood pressure comes under control, but the purpose of tantric meditation is none of these.

In tantric meditation, we are definitely trying to materialize one important aspect of consciousness, and that is shakti, also known as Devi. This consciousness is in a dormant, potential state in everybody and that is why they say in tantra that the kundalini is sleeping in mooladhara chakra. However, when due to tantric meditation, the kundalini wakes up, new doors of perception are opened. Then you can see your ishta devata, or your own deity, your own guru, in the flesh and blood. That is the highest realization and manifestation of shakti, and that is the aim of tantric meditation.

Let me make a summary

1. When you are practising tantric meditation, please consider the mind as a tool, as a vehicle, and as a good friend.
2. When distractions come into your mind, any type of distractions – worry, anxiety, passion, ambition, plans, fears, scares, anything, don't say, "Distractions" Say, "Purging, cleansing, things coming out. I'm getting lighter and lighter; I'm throwing away my karmas; I'm bringing them from the bottom of the unconscious and subconscious to the conscious plane and getting rid of them."
3. Do not try to concentrate. This is very difficult for most of you who have been taught yoga for decades on the basis of concentration. It's very hard to deprogram the whole thing. Then what do you do if you do not concentrate? Say, "Whatever happens, let it happen. Let it happen as it happens."

Assume my mantra is *Om Namah Shivaya*. I sit down for half an hour and chant it in my own way. I sing it or I say it or I think it, etc. For some time, I'm aware of *Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya . . .* and suddenly my mind gets out. I'm thinking of my family problems, of my business problems, of money, love, hatred and success – okay! . . . *Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya*, and go on, simply following the entire expression of your mind in all the different areas.

4. Then suddenly you find that the mind automatically identifies itself with *Om Namah Shivaya*, so total identification takes place, but without you trying to concentrate. There is a spontaneous identification between the mind and the object of meditation.
5. Through the practices of mantra, yantra and mandala, when the consciousness is in the process of objectifying itself, you experience the apparent objective experiences. At this time many people are scared. They think, "Oh, it's a ghost," or "An angel has come," or "My dead mother has returned to me."

I had many such experiences when I first stayed in Munger, some of them frightening, some of them beautiful, some of people I had never seen, others of people I knew. Then on 14 July, 1963, I had the darshan of my guru, Swami Sivananda. I knew that the inner awakening had taken place, and it was at the exact moment that he left his body in Rishikesh.

These experiences can come to anybody. There is nothing to be frightened of, and you will have to overcome the fear. If you cannot overcome the fear, you cannot have clear vision. In order to overcome the fear, it will help you to know that what is happening is all part of the process of consciousness unfolding, before the consciousness objectifies itself. These experiences can always come to you, just as they have come to most people who have trodden the path.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Does the tantra yoga you're speaking about have the power to burn off karma, like the kriya yoga of Paramahansa Yogananda?

Kriya yoga is an ancient group of practices from the body of tantra, and it has seventeen main practices, such as vipareeta karani mudra, nada sanchalana, pawan sanchalana, shabda sanchalana, naumukhi mudra, shakti chalini mudra, maha mudra, maha bheda mudra, etc. These kriyas are very powerful. They can make us free from the burdens of karma of lives and lives, and render our consciousness clearer and more pure, so that we can have a greater vision of life.

What other ways are there of burning karma?

There are many ways of burning, destroying or exhausting karmas, but they are more difficult practices. Austerity (penance) is one very extreme way of exhausting karma. Serving the guru, serving the poor, working without any selfish motive are also very important paths for the exhaustion of karma – karma yoga. Thus, by the grace of God and the blessings of guru, one can exhaust the karma.

You were speaking of mandala. How would you practise that?

When you want to practise meditation on mandala, you have to choose a definite image with three dimensions, and you keep that image in front of you. Supposing it is the image of a shivalingam, Devi, or Mother Mary, you keep it in front of you as much as possible.

The image should not be just a symbol for you. It should be a reality, so much so that you do not think in your mind that this image represents that. The image must be the reality, and you must identify yourself with that image, not only during meditation, but at other times as well.

There was a princess in the western part of India whose name was Mirabai. When she was in her teens, a saint came and gave her a small statue of Krishna. She kept that statue with her throughout her life and she maintained that he was her husband. She developed a great spiritual light within herself through this, and today in India there is no one who doesn't know her. Her devotional poems, her songs and her glory are sung in every home.

Mirabai had such great rapport with the *murti*, or statue, of Krishna which the saint had given her, that a number of times she was saved from death. Once her mother-in-law was very angry with her and sent a cup of poison to kill her. However, as the story goes when she drank it, the poison just changed its quality. Another time a cobra was sent to her in a gift box and when she opened the box, the snake became the symbol of Narayana (Vishnu). There is a deeper meaning in these stories, of course.

On another occasion, her husband, who was the king of that area, suspected Mirabai of foul play because she used to close her apartment door and talk to Krishna just as you would talk to the person you love. One day, as he overheard her, he kicked down the door, but inside there was nothing amiss. He asked her, "With whom were you talking?" and she answered, "I was talking to my darling."

He questioned her, "Who is he?" When she told him, "It's Krishna," he thought she was going crazy. After that, she could

no longer stay there and she left her palace and went to live in Vrindavan, the birthplace of Krishna. It is said that at the time of her death, she entered into the sanctum sanctorum of Dwarika Dhish, the main temple in Mathura, and dissolved herself into the idol of Krishna.

What I'm talking about is that when you have an image for yourself, you will have to identify with it totally. If you cannot, then you are merely doing a ritualistic worship. For you, it should not be just a stone statue, nor can it be just a symbol, or a representation. Let us say you have a statue of Mother Mary. You then have to feel, "This is Mother Mary." You can't say that she existed 1,900 years ago and this is her statue. No, this symbol is the reality. That should be the depth of your vision and of your identity with it; that is the scientific approach to mandala for spiritual awareness.

Do you have to use the same mandala all the time?

Yes. If you change it, the pattern of your consciousness will also change. You have to keep only one image.

Can we get that image from our dreams?

Yes, if you get that image in a dream, and if you can maintain the true perception of that image, it's alright.

You were talking about worshipping the idol of Mary. What about in the Bible? It says "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Does that mean that we can't have images?

You see, I really do not know whether I should interpret these passages from the Bible because I do not think that I am an authority on that subject. However, this is my very personal interpretation, and no Christian or Jew must misunderstand me.

In those days I think there were many groups in that part of the country all fighting for supremacy of their gods. One would say, "This is my God." Others would say, "This is my God, beat him. His God is unreal." They would have all been trying to establish the supremacy of a religious object.

Therefore, this statement was made in order to clean those cobwebs.

Otherwise, the one who made that statement would not worry at all about which deity you meditate upon, since you meditate on your guru and he meditates on his ishta devata. What business have I to say, “Don’t do it.” However, if you fight with him and he fights with me, then this wise man will have to say, “These people are fighting; I’d better clear them of their images.” This is my personal interpretation.

In the western world there seems to be a concept of tantra that is different from the original tantra. Would you comment on similarities there?

The fundamental principles are the same. In the tantric tradition, the practices are enjoined according to the temperaments, the evolution and the tribal differences of the people. The tantric system of practices is divided as follows:

1. Tantric practices according to the vedic precepts. That is called *vedachara tantra*, and it is popular in the south of India.
2. Tantric practices according to the tradition and system handed down in the family line. That is called *kaulachara tantra*, which is very predominant, very popular in Kashmir, and in the north of Bihar, the state where I live.
3. *Vamachara tantra* is based on the relationship with one’s wife. By mistake this has been translated into English as ‘left-handed tantra’, because of confusion between the words *vamo* (left) and *varmar* (wife), one who traditionally sits on the left.
4. *Aghora tantra*. This point of view considers nothing abominable. *A* means ‘no’ and *ghora* means abominable.

All of these are also classified according to the sects or cults, such as Shaiva tantra (related to Shiva), Shakta tantra (related to Shakti), Vaishnava tantra (related to Vishnu), Surya tantra (related to the sun), Ganesha tantra (related to Ganesha). All these tantras contain rituals, the practices

and forms of visualization. But in the modern world some misunderstanding has come up. The practices of tantra have been identified with sex, wine, meat, etc. But such things are not in vedachara tantra, in kaulachara tantra, or in vamachara tantra, and they are only a small part of aghora tantra.

The tantric practices should be given according to the quality of the aspirant. Aspirants are again graded into three qualities: (i) the tamasic aspirants, who are known to be practising tantra through the instincts, (ii) the rajasic type of aspirants, who are supposed to be practising tantra with a lot of dynamism and aggressiveness, and (iii) the sattwic type of people, who practise the sattwic type of tantra.

You may practise tantra with your wife, through sexual interaction, but the sattwic aspirant need not. Therefore, celibacy, brahmacharya, continence, self-restraint is enjoined in sattwic tantras. Sexual interaction is enjoined in the rajasic tantras. The quality of the aspirant is the main difference. Tantra does not ask us to make a total departure from our present lifestyle. We start our practices from where we are, then as the transformation takes place maybe these things will remain and maybe they will go away.

What is important in meditation is to pray, to have emotional prayer. Devotional prayer is what leads to meditation.

Yes, but I do not say that everybody should do it. Everyone has his own religion. Why should I get into it? If I get into it, and say, “You must pray,” then I also become a bishop. I try to avoid advising that, though I am not against it.

Can you give us an example of how one would go about practising tantric meditation?

Fix some time, either in the morning or in the night, preferably with an empty stomach, or a light stomach. Practise a few pranayamas, such as bhastrika, and after that take your mantra and chant it. It can be any mantra. I don't have to tell you that. Sometimes chant it very slowly, sometimes rhythmically – *Om, Om, Om*, sometimes *A-u-m*,

sometimes *Ommmmmm*, and don't worry about the mind – that's important.

After the mantra, you can bring your mind to the mid-eyebrow centre, or maybe the heart, and there you draw a yantra, or think about a yantra. You will have to decide for yourself which yantra you are going to use. There are many *yantras*, which are special geometrical figures which evoke a response from deep in the unconscious mind. You may also use a mandala in the form of a picture, ishta, guru, etc. It can be anything like that, but it must always be the same thing.

Many people say that it is difficult to walk the spiritual path without a guru. It can be done, but it is very difficult. Could you comment on this?

In order to acquire any form of knowledge you must have a teacher. We are aware of two kinds of knowledge, empirical and spiritual. For empirical knowledge, such as geometry, mathematics, biology, botany, etc., you need teachers and professors. If you don't have them or if the ones you have are incompetent, you will fail your examination. In the same way, for spiritual knowledge one must have a guru.

Guru does not mean 'teacher', 'master' or 'tutor'. *Guru* means one who can transmit his light to help you in the beginning, so that you may walk with your own light later. First I show you the torchlight; later you will get your own light. Even from the point of view of submission of ego, a guru is necessary. We have to learn to submit our ego to a guru first, and then when that task is over, if we want to go to God, we can go completely empty.

Does your guru have to be alive or can you have one who has passed on?

For developed people, it is immaterial whether he is alive or not, but for mediocre types, a living guru is essential. Frankly speaking, the real guru is inside everybody, and is called the *satguru*. He is the indweller in everybody's heart, but the problem is can we hear him? We can't. Do we know what he

is telling us? No. Therefore, first we go to an external guru, and with his help we develop a subtle mind. Then we can hear the voice of the inner guru.



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Swami Sivananda: Saint and Guru

Yoga Teachers Cooperative, Santa Monica, California, 8 September 1982.

In 1942, I left my home and went in search of a guru because the experiences I had in my early life could not be organized and developed. I did meet many swamis who passed through my town. They could explain things to me intellectually, but they did not know how to handle the matter of whether I was a psychic patient or whether I was evolving spiritually.

My town was situated on the way to Mount Kailash, one of the most important places of pilgrimage for Hindus, as they consider it the home and abode of Lord Shiva. So, the sannyasins, the sadhus and saints on their way there used to pass through my town and we had the privilege of having them with us.

My search

When I left my home in 1942 to look for my guru, I did not know where to go. In India then it was not the tradition to popularize and promote gurus. This tradition of advertising gurus is a contribution of the West to the East. Consequently, we did not know who was a guru or where to go. It is not that there were no gurus, there were, but the publicity was really low profile. At that time my sister was a disciple of a guru

and I vaguely remembered that she was practising some sort of sadhana, but I was not very clear on it because she had married many years before, and had moved away from home. Hence, as I did not know where else to go, I went to her in Rajasthan in western India, where she was a medical officer in Udaipur. She appreciated my search and directed me to her guru and I lived with him for a while.

My sister's guru was eighty-five years old and he was a master of tantra yoga and hatha yoga. He had very few disciples, but a big establishment and a temple. He wanted me to stay with him and become his successor, but I could never really understand that. I learned many things from him theoretically, but after about nine months I decided to leave. He was a very good person, well informed, gentle, pure, sincere, but he was not meant for me.

I left the ashram in total darkness, and after some time I reached a place in Uttar Pradesh called Bareilly. I was in the third-class waiting room at the railway station and an old man who was sitting near me asked, "Where are you going?" I said, "In search of a guru." He said, "Which place are you going to?" and I said, "I don't know where to go." He said, "Go to Rishikesh; there are many swamis there."

I don't remember which way I went to Rishikesh, or which train I took, I almost lost identity with the external happenings. I am still not able to remember them today; they are just not a part of my memory. When the train was reaching Rishikesh, there was a sannyasi in the same compartment. He had matted locks and beard and must have been forty-five or fifty.

I remember that he was smoking and I had not smoked for a long time. I was tempted and asked him for a cigarette. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm going to find a guru." He asked, "Which place are you going to?" and I said, "I don't know." So he took me to a place in Rishikesh and dumped me there.

Luckily, in that institution where I was staying, there was a person from my district. Though he was not known to me,

he had come to know that an educated, nineteen-year-old boy had been staying there for twenty-four hours, and so he came to me to inquire about my aspirations. I explained everything to him and he sent me to a great swami in Rishikesh whose name was Vishnudevananda (not the one in Canada who is my gurubhai). I met him and asked if I could stay at his ashram so that he could help me in my spiritual life, but he directed me to Swami Sivananda Saraswati.

With Swami Sivananda

It was early morning on 19th March, 1943, when I arrived at my guru's ashram. The place was so powerful and everything there was so spiritually charged that my mind completely ceased to function. I experienced total tranquillity, and the intellectual analysis which I used to do all the time – Who is this guru? Is he my guru? How can he be my guru? Is he realized? – stopped as though my intellect was completely gone. The power of analysis and so called enquiry ceased. I did not think that he was my guru, nor did I think that he was not my guru. The positive and negative aspects completely ceased. That was even before I saw him.

I arrived there at seven o'clock in the morning, and went to a beautiful place called the bhajan hall (prayer hall) where one swami, near a lamp, was singing *Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare; Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare* – the Mahamantra. At nine o'clock, I went down to a very dilapidated house where Swamiji was seated.

I don't know if I prostrated or greeted him; I only remember that he said, "What do you want?" I said, "I want to stay here and live with you." "What for?" was his question. I said, "In order to transcend the mental state which I have arrived at." He said, "Okay, you stay here and serve everybody." From that time I stayed with Swami Sivananda.

I never cared whether Swamiji taught me yoga, pranayama, Vedanta or tantra. Nothing mattered; nothing even came into my mind. I just plunged into karma yoga, which is an

expression of jnana yoga and bhakti yoga anyway. Without the combination of jnana yoga and bhakti yoga, that is to say, without higher awareness and perfected devotion, you can never serve your guru.

You must serve your guru selflessly, without any conditions, preconceived notions or intellectual rationalizing, like an innocent child who loves his mother but doesn't know why he does. That innocent attitude, that innocent devotion with a higher mind is the basis for karma yoga.

When you serve anyone with even the least expectation, you are actually enacting a part of the ego, and at that time the light is far from you. However, you cannot decide all these issues intellectually. They have to happen spontaneously; spontaneity of love, spontaneity of selflessness and spontaneity of egolessness are a manifestation of higher awareness, or of the grace of the guru.

My service

That period between 1943 and 1946 was a difficult time in the ashram because the Divine Life Society was in the process of early development. There were no places to sleep, scorpions climbed into our beds at night and snakes at anytime. Even worse were the terrible and cruel mosquitoes. The ashram was open to dense forest where tigers used to roam at night. When it was my turn to participate in the unbroken kirtan in the bhajan hall for one hour during the night, I used to close all the doors so that a tiger wouldn't come and devour me.

Swami Sivananda had decided to conduct unbroken kirtan called *akhandā kirtan*, which continued twenty-four hours a day, throughout the week, month and year. At one particular place they kept two lamps burning with mustard oil, and at least one swami used to sit there all the time, at the feet of Sri Rama, Krishna, Shiva, and sing the Mahamantra. One hour was the duty at night and two hours during the day. I was given night duty and in order to do that I had to sleep in the hall itself, but I was not very happy about the tigers.

I had come from a very comfortable home. My family did not even know how much wealth they had; immense wealth, property, resources and revenue. I did not know what poverty was. I did not know how to sleep on the floor. I'd never seen one mosquito in my life. I'd never seen bugs in my life. I'd never felt heat because I was born at high altitude in the Himalayas, Almora in Uttar Pradesh, and here it was so hot. I used to fall ill from time to time, but I would think, "If I die, it doesn't matter; I'll die at the feet of my guru." As a Hindu, I had that faith in my mind – if you die at the feet of the guru, you are liberated.

In retrospect, I think that pain, sickness, disease, insult, injury, and so on, are the blessings you get from God when you are destined to cross and transcend the passions, ambitions and fevers of life. During those days, weeks and months, when I sometimes had hepatitis, malaria, typhoid, ulcers in the mouth, sty in the eye, all kinds of things, my mind used to be so calm, so quiet. Even if anybody had put before me an object of ambition, passion or craving, I would have kicked it.

Swami Sivananda had a song: "Pain is a crucible into which nature throws a man whenever she wants to mould him into a sublime superman." He used to sing it now and then, but I did not realize at that time just how true it was. When you suffer from pain, whether physical or emotional, concerning money or possessions, love, hate, enmity, or even concerning things you do not know, those pains are given to you by nature exactly at the time when you are to be transformed and cast into the pattern of a superman. You know the stories of the Christian saints and saints of the East, the swamis and sannyasins; they all experienced pain.

In 1947, the illusion of the mind, *maya*, conquered me for a while. I began to think, "If I have to serve like this, to work like a donkey, then I can do it anywhere. After all, anything can become karma yoga." Maya was playing a great trick on me and I was completely under her control; under her spell.

I did not inform anybody, but I wrote a letter to one of my friends in Delhi who was the managing director of a daily newspaper *The Tribune*. He immediately sent me four hundred rupees and an appointment letter as sub-editor for that paper. With the four hundred rupees, I bought a coat, pants, tie, shirt and nice shoes, and packed everything. Then I revived and groomed my knowledge about politics and current affairs because I would have to write as a journalist.

It was just before Swamiji's birthday that I told him I was leaving and he said, "Where are you going?" I replied, "I'm going to Delhi," and I told him everything. He said, "Alright, but please attend the birthday celebrations." His birthday fell on September 8th, when he would complete his sixtieth year. This was a very important occasion and the Divine Life Society, his devotees and his disciples were to celebrate that day as his Diamond Jubilee.

So, I stayed up to the 8th September, and on the 9th and 10th I did not go because so many people were there. Then on the 11th of September, Swamiji called me to his cottage and said, "You are not going back. Tomorrow morning you are going to take sannayasa." That was a bolt from the blue. I was shocked, but I couldn't do anything because he was more powerful than I was in every respect. He just closed my mind again.

The surrender

The 11th September afternoon passed, night passed, and I was completely helpless. My mind couldn't stir even a little bit. Then the next morning at seven o'clock, like a puppet, I went to his cottage and he was ready with scissors to cut off my hair. He cut it, gave me the geru dhoti as I am wearing now and told me, "Your name will be Satyananda from today, and do not discard this dress, even if your skin has to be peeled off." That's all he said. He asked me to take a bath in the Ganges, and I stayed in the ashram from that day.

I have faced life, and I have faced internal and external difficulties in spite of my accomplishments in the path of yoga.

You will be surprised to hear this because most people have the wrong impression. They think that the moment you start yoga, or you have certain yogic experiences, or you can sit in meditation for three, four or five hours, you should become a superman. They think that you shouldn't act in a worldly way, and that life should not be able to touch you.

This is wrong; it is an incorrect idea. Even at the height of meditation, when the mind is about to dissolve and all the elements of nature are about to become fused in the greater light, the karmas, the forces of life which follow a person, still pull him and drag him. He has to face temptations and conquer them. He has to face passions and attachments, all kinds of things, even when he is highly advanced.

Therefore, all aspirants and sadhakas must be very careful. They should not be duped by their own spiritual performances in meditation. Maya is so powerful that only a *jivanmukta*, a liberated soul, is safe. Everybody else can become a total victim to *maya*, this imaginary power.

I stayed with Swami Sivananda from 1943 to 1956. Then, on 19th March, he called me to his cottage and told me that I had to go away. I had not at all expected this because I had completely surrendered myself to his will, to his grace. I said, "What do you want me to do?" and he said, "Go. No ashram, no duties, no karma yoga; just go from door to door and from shore to shore and have the experience of the whole world." That is the exact phrase that he used, not as a guru or a saint, but as one with the humility of an aspirant. So I left in 1956 and until 1963 I roamed throughout the whole central Asia area.

Experiences in Munger

During the period of my wandering I came to a place called Munger, in Bihar, which is the place where I live now. There I used to spend my days and nights in an old building on top of a hillock. They were periods of total nightmare, I thought I would go insane; a series of experiences would come, sometimes inner experiences, which I knew were from within

myself, but also many times they appeared to be happening outside, although I knew nothing was happening there.

Out of fright, I left Munger many times and each time I left, all the experiences vanished. However, when I had been away for a few months, I was tempted to have the same experiences again, because the sadhana I was practising did not give me such an effect.

Strangely, it had been my request to Swami Sivananda when I saw him on the first day, but then when those experiences were given to me, in my ignorance, I was frightened. I didn't want to have them. I ran away. There is a beautiful reference about such experiences in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, where Arjuna asks Krishna for a glimpse of his cosmic form, but when he is made to see it, he can't stand the experience.

There is an interesting history attached to that hillock which, I believe, accounts for the experiences I had there. Over five thousand years ago, around the time of the Mahabharata war, a great yogi, a tantric, lived there. He was the king of that area. His name was Karna and he was the immaculate son of Kunti. However, nobody believed that he was immaculate, so she had to abandon him because people would have considered him illegitimate. As a result he was fostered by somebody else. He ruled this area called Anga, the present day Munger and Bhagalpur district where I stayed, and the hillock is supposed to be the place where he practised tantra.

The story goes that every night he used to offer his body to sixty-four yoginis. When I had those experiences in that place, I did not really know why they were happening, and it was not until many years later that someone told me the story that this was the place where Karna had practised his great tantric sadhana.

After 5,183 years the magnetism of that place still survived. You may or may not believe that. That place is where the ashram is now situated. It houses several hundred people, one person in one room, and it is always full. People

do not really come for yoga, although I teach them asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas, meditation, kriya yoga, etc. They come because they think that when they go there, all their physical, mental and spiritual maladies will be gone.

Shiva's grace

This is my reference to Swami Sivananda, who is the maker of my life and destiny. Swamiji was a great yogi without any ego, without any vanity. I remember very well when people in difficulty used to go to him, he would not say, like an arrogant and egotistic person, "Okay, you will be alright. I'll bless you." He never enacted this drama. Instead he would say, "I'll pray for you and I'm sure that, by the grace of God, your son will be alright." He was a man of few words.

He did not boast or proclaim anything. People used to come to him and say, "Swamiji, my wife is suffering from cancer, can you tell me what to do?" and he would say, "I think your wife must do asanas, pranayamas, not eat meat, not smoke, and be a nice person. Tonight, when the prayers are held, I'll pray for your wife and I will send prasad to apply on her forehead. I'm sure that with the grace of God, she will be alright."

He never claimed the performance of miraculous powers and used to say that you have to be humbler than a blade of grass, and that when you obtain *siddhis*, psychic powers, if you try to own them, you fall down. You have to disown them because we do not do anything; we are just the instruments. The grace flows from the higher source and therefore all credits should go to Him. That's all about Swamiji and about myself.

Today, we celebrate with joy the birthday of Swamiji, who was the humblest of the humble, kindest of the kind, warmest of the warm, greatest among the great, and whose effulgence is permeating and kindling the hearts of millions around the world.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I am interested in knowing how to improve the quality of sleep, perhaps in order to shorten the amount of time spent in sleep.

According to raja yoga and Samkhya philosophy, sleep is a pattern of mind. In order to experience superconsciousness, in order to experience samadhi, one should be able to control this vritti also. This, however, does not mean that you should not sleep. This means sleep is a mental condition and you have to maintain perpetual awareness of sleep, even as you are aware of the objects now and you know that you are aware. Sometimes when you dream, you know that you are dreaming. In the same way, when you sleep, you must know that you are sleeping.

You should be a witness of all the states of mind: waking, dreaming and sleeping. The seer is the self, the spirit, but it identifies itself with the three states. In order to experience these states as distinct from the self, you have to separate yourself from these objective or subjective experiences. How is that done? When you practise *dhyana yoga*, meditation, you should simply observe the behaviour of the mind as an impartial spectator. That is why I tell everybody not to run after the mind, not to chase the mind as if it were an enemy. Do not try to suppress the impressions, the impulses and the patterns arising from the depths of the mind.

When there is a thought pattern in your mind, where is it coming from? It's not coming from outside. A thought is an expression of the mind and is only excited by external factors. External factors excite and stimulate thought; they do not cause it. The cause of an experience is inherent in you. A thought, a dream, sleep, all these experiences are your own expressions.

So, gradually, when you meditate, first practise separating yourself as a seer, as a perceiver of the objects, of the thoughts, or whatever is happening to your mind. Sometimes you may be thinking about God. Don't just dissolve yourself; don't

identify yourself. See – the mind is thinking about God, thinking about purity, thinking about flowers, thinking about hatred, love, ambition, passion, depression. It is difficult in the beginning, but you will develop it.

Begin the sadhana in this way. Sit for meditation in the lotus pose or even lie in shavasana. First of all, you must try to be a witness or a spectator of the sensorial experiences – the noise coming from the kitchen or the cars on the street, or you are hearing a movement or the door banging – the sensorial experiences. You must detach yourself, disidentify yourself, and observe them – I am hearing.

The practise is very simple and if you keep yourself alert and aware of all the sensations, tactile, olfactory and auditory perceptions, gradually you will find that the sensorial experiences which you are able to know are more than just that. There are many experiences belonging to the realms of the senses to which we respond and react, but don't know. They are in the thousands. So that is the first step. Witness the sense behaviour. Then witness the mental behaviour, and after that witness the psychic behaviour.

What is psychic behaviour? With your eyes closed, you see colours, visions, shadows, hear sounds from within, sensations from within, not from without. You must witness them very carefully, and in the course of time, it might take one year or even two or three, depending on your keenness, you can witness each and every behaviour of your psyche.

That means that when you are dreaming at night, the dream becomes an activity of which you are the seer. The dream is an expression of the mind and you are witnessing that the dream is taking place. That is the third stage. Then comes what we call *laya*, the dissolution of the conscious and subconscious activities of the mind – sleep. Sleep is an expression of *anandamaya kosha*, the causal awareness, total suspension of the activities of the mind, when the mind is in the original primitive state, when you see that *laya* state of mind.

I practised this *laya* yoga for five years when I was living in Rishikesh. Every month I increased the period of seeing

or trying to see the sleep awareness. Many times, when you are almost falling asleep, for some time you are aware that sleep is coming. I increased that period from one minute to two, three, four, five minutes, to five hours. I knew that I was asleep, but at the same time I was awake.

When your senses are active, you experience the body and the life force. When you enter into the subconscious mind, or the astral body, then you can't experience the body and the life force. You experience the mind, the visions and the dreams. Then when you enter into anandamaya kosha, you only experience the bliss, not objects, not visions. This is how the whole thing has to be developed, step-by-step.

How can we deal with anger, fear and negativities? When they come up, should we also witness them and let them go by or should we put up a counter block? What do you recommend?

Positive and negative qualities of the mind are born of the mind. They are manifestations of the mind. They do not belong to the self, *atma*, spirit or superconsciousness. The higher spirit is beyond both positive and negative. Therefore, you must try your level best to transcend both of these by not recognizing them.

If you accept positive manifestations of mind as good and negative manifestations as bad, you are recognizing them, accepting their existence, giving them a seal of recognition. Therefore, in meditation, introspection and self-analysis, when positive or negative forces arise in the mind, you must disidentify yourself from them and observe them as expressions of a mind which, in the course of time, will be finished, will be exhausted.

Will you teach us one kriya practice?

No, teaching kriya is not possible here. I don't have any secrets because knowledge is for the good of all people, but this is not the right atmosphere in which to teach. However, I will explain something about kriya yoga.

In kriya yoga there are very important practices which create a condition within yourself so that the mind becomes automatically peaceful, and separation of mind and spirit takes place. You do not have to strive very hard. For example, the first kriya in kriya yoga is vipareeta karani mudra. *Vipareeta* means 'reverse'.

It is said in kriya yoga that, "The moon secretes nectar, the sun consumes the nectar and the yogi becomes sick and dies prematurely." Through the practices of kriya yoga you can reverse this process, which means that instead of the sun consuming the nectar, it should flow back to the moon. On this basis, vipareeta karani mudra has been designed. In vipareeta karani mudra, this process of reversing the flow of nectar is responsible for a higher state.

In kriya yoga, as well as in tantra and hatha yoga, there is a mudra known as khechari mudra. Khechari mudra is practised in two ways. The hatha yogis snip the root of the tongue, elongate the tongue and then insert it into the naso-pharynx. The kriya yogis do not do that. They just turn their tongue and stick it in to the upper palate, and in the course of time it gets inserted into the naso-pharynx.

On the posterior walls of that part are certain centres which, if stimulated, produce activity in the bindu visarga, which is supposed to be the centre where the nectar is produced. As a result, the nectar drips. When the flow of nectar begins, it is absorbed by the body, and mental consciousness changes. You get a sort of disidentification with the realities of sense objects and they begin to lose their relationship to you, as they were related to you before. You are neither sleeping, nor are you awake, nor do you see the objects. The eyes become quiet and the mind becomes quiet. This is called unmani mudra.

So, these practices of kriya yoga, like vipareeta karani mudra, improve the physiological, psychological and emotional factors related to each other, so that a certain higher spiritual state is attained. Then aspirants who are very ordinary in their life, who may not know any way to control

their mind, or who may not even have the firm willpower to handle the mind, suddenly find that they have become quiet, as in the state of *pratyahara*, withdrawal of the senses. With the accomplishment of *pratyahara*, you can then go ahead with meditation.

You spoke about bindu visarga and the practices for it to secrete nectar. For those of us who are instructors of the techniques, who have not experienced what they are supposed to do, how do you feel about us teaching them?

There are two sources of knowledge. One is called personal experience and the other is called indirect experience, that experience you do not have through the medium of the senses directly. You hear from your guru or teachers, or you read from the authentic texts. It is not possible for everybody to experience everything. There are many asanas which I have not been able to perfect at all, but I can still teach them.

Of course, some of the statements and some of the truths stated in *kriya yoga* texts and *hatha yoga* texts have been examined lately by studies in science. From these scientific studies, which have gone fairly far, we do understand and accept that there are some secretions in the body which are very powerful and beneficial. There are those which can destroy the cells, create toxins, change the proper quality of the mind and make it think vicious things. There are also those secretions which are inherent in the system, that can create a very positive environment in the body, the mind and the emotions.

When you practise *hatha yoga*, or any other yoga which can purify the nadis, the prana, and the humours in the body, the secretions which are inherent, but which have remained suppressed in the toxic condition, begin to secrete. That is precisely the reason why we change to a *sattwic* diet, and when we develop *sattwic*, harmonious environments around us, we develop harmonious thinking, and have the sort of visions, experiences and colours which did not really happen before.

These can also be due to the influence of the secretions, and of all the secretions, amrit is supposed to be the highest.

You use the word tantra a lot. I'd like to know what you mean by that. I'd also like to know the place of tantric sex as a meditation and as a loving expression in spiritual sadhana.

Well, the question is very important. I have written a lot about it, and whatever I have to say about it has to be responsible, sincere and truthful. I need not give you my opinion and my view. I can give that only to the intimate disciple who comes to learn, and then only if I find him capable and deserving. This is an academic reply to you.

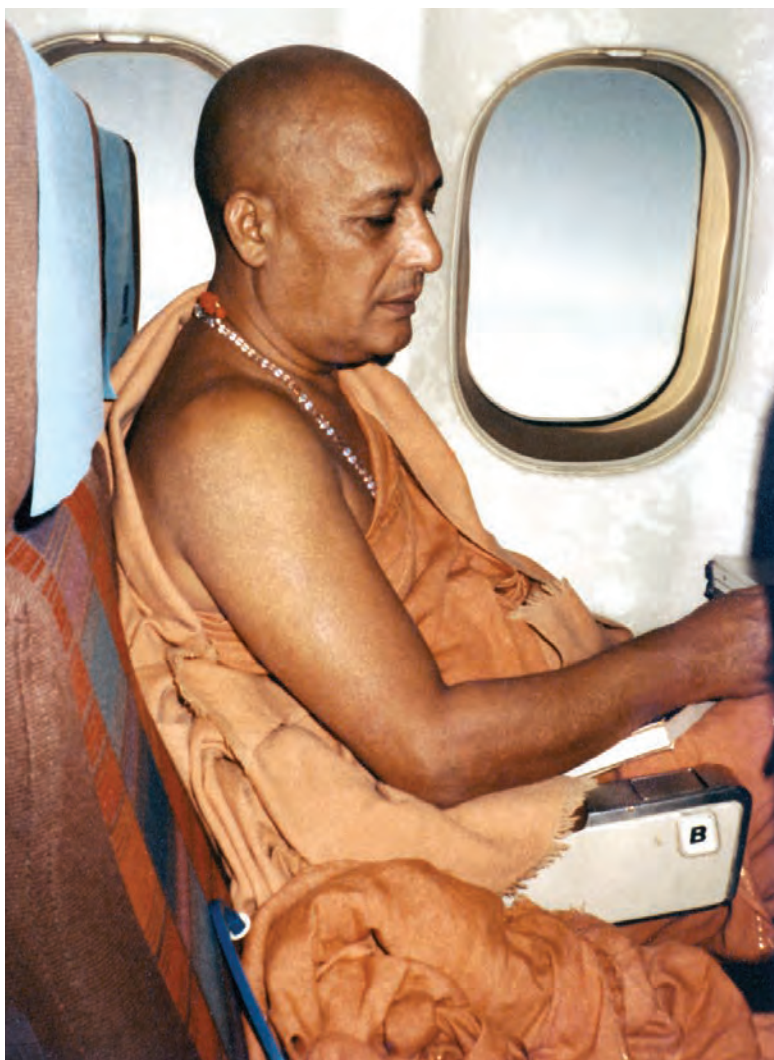
In many books which interpret tantra and tantric practices, they say that the five elements which are included in the tantric practices do not literally mean the objects stated. For example, in English the word is sex; in tantra the word is maithuna. Maithuna is derived from the Sanskrit word *mithuna*, which means 'twins', as in the zodiac sign of Gemini. When the two poles of energy join each other, that is called *maithuna*.

Now, for a gross person it could be a union between a man and a woman, but for a subtle person maithuna or mithuna should mean the union between the two opposite poles of energy within one person. It is not only externally, when a man and a woman are Shiva and Shakti; in you also there are two poles. So why not unite those two?

Certainly, vamachara tantra teaches sadhana done with one's wife. However, the tantric texts clearly state that although anyone can practise vedic tantra and kaulachara tantra, which are the other types, only a self-controlled person should practise vamachara tantra. The rule that binds an aspirant and makes him eligible to practise sexual tantra is that he should be a yogi first and then do it, otherwise there is every possibility of misuse.

You may be a good yogi and I may be a sincere person. You may be going to your wife and I may be going to my wife in all sincerity. However, there are also stupid people in

this world who are going to say, “Oh, very good, tantra! I will practise it from today. Why don’t you practise it with me?” And this will cause a lot of anarchy society. All the discos will become tantric schools of yoga!



21

Satsang

*The residence of Anil and Sucheta Kapuria, San Jose, California,
9 September 1982.*

Can you explain the philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya?

You cannot understand the philosophical ideas and experiences of the scholars and saints like Shankara, Ramanuja and others unless you have gone into the same level of experience. Therefore, first it is important that the basis is prepared – a healthy mind and a mind which has experience and which is capable of continuing to experience. Then after you have had that experience, I don't have to teach you philosophy because you realize the truth about everything which is inherent in everybody. If you improve the quality of the mind, you know how to think. Then, later, there are books.

Do you have to learn Sanskrit to study those?

It is better. A lot of the scholars like Max Mueller and other translators have made a lot of mistakes because they didn't have thorough first-hand knowledge of orthodox Sanskrit. Sanskrit is a very precise language. You can't say, "This can mean this and that also." There are no exceptions.

It is the only language that does not have one exception, either in pronunciation, in grammar or in ideas. What means something once means that forever. It is not like English where you say, 'take, took, taken', but not, 'make, mook, maken', and

where fox becomes foxes but ox does not become oxes. These are called exceptions and they are in every other language, including Hindi, but never in Sanskrit.

People say that Sanskrit was designed before it was used. Was it ever a spoken language?

During the period of Buddha, about 2,800 years ago, Sanskrit was already replaced by Pali and other dialects. This means that Sanskrit is older than Buddha. During the time of Ashoka, the edicts of Ashoka were written in the Brahmlipi language. There is no Sanskrit written character. Just as in English or French, the characters in which they are written is Roman, so in Sanskrit, Hindi and Marathi, the character is known as Devanagari. Now, Devanagari had a similar predecessor called Brahmi, and many of the old texts were written in Brahmi. It is also interesting to note that Brahmi and the Hebrew script are quite similar in design.

When we look at the Indian philosophers' thinking, we see that it is unique. Indian thought is very different from Western thought.

It is not different from the conclusions which modern scientists and physicists have arrived at since Einstein. When you study relativity and the quantum theory, the relativity of mind in relation to time, space and objects, and the conclusion that there is no ultimate nor absolute existence of matter, you see that the scientists are speaking about the same things as the Indian philosophers. Of course, when it comes to philosophical thought, there is really no Western or Eastern.

I was talking about Western religious thinking, where it is only one book.

You have to be more specific. You probably mean biblical thinking. In the West there are many currents which are still subdued and suppressed. When you say West, it means any place west of Istanbul, and in Western countries, there are

many philosophical undercurrents. These undercurrents are sometimes integrated and sometimes they are not recognized. Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Theosophy, people who believe in the Atlantis civilization, and many others are here. They have a different philosophy of life, death and God than the biblical outlook, and they are trying to grow and become more recognized.

Whenever you organize a philosophy, a religion, or certain ideas with the help of government machinery, these things happen. If Hindu dharma was organized by the government, it would happen to Hinduism also. They would have to say three plus three equals six, but Hinduism says that three plus three can be five, six or seven, depending on many factors. In organized religions, there is always a socio-political undertone, and then the philosophy becomes just a creed and not a discovery.

We must keep asking, "How can you say God lives then? Can you prove it? How do I know it?" We should discover it; we should find out what God is. Is he a person, an idea, a force, a shakti? You see, the discovery about God should be perpetual. We should not put an end to the discovery. You can't decide finally about God, if he is God or what he is.

If God is infinite, it means that you have never reached him. And if you have reached him, he is no longer infinite. Claiming to know the ultimate word on God does not seem to me to be very logical. Therefore, in the Upanishads they say, "Neti, neti": not this, not this. In vedic philosophy, there is nothing which is declared as final about transcendental things. There have been various statements made by the Upanishads, Buddha, Mahavir, but no finality.

What I want to understand is why the process of those stages of religious thought is so different from the short process of the *New Testament* religions?

The *New Testament* is only 2,000 years old. After another 2,000 years, the same people who are thinking in one way today will think very differently. In only the last fifty years,

things have changed a lot. For instance, recent surveys published in *Newsweek* show two-thirds of Americans believe in transmigration.

But Hindu thoughts haven't changed?

No, because it is a very ancient and broad system. The biblical way of thinking was also a Hindu way of thinking. What else is the old puranic thinking? Even now, how does Swami Dayananda think? If you just study Arya Samaj, "God is in heaven; he is the father of all; he is kind, compassionate and looks after everybody . . ."; it's the same.

Hindus do not disagree with any way of thinking whether it is Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian or any other, but they don't accept the statement that anyone's conclusions are the last word. Hindus never disagree with anyone's thinking on transcendental matters.



22

Press Conference

San Francisco, California, 10 September 1982.

There is now a great deal of interest in yoga in the West, especially as it is seen in a scientific framework rather than a mystical one. Would you comment on this?

There has been a lot of mystic philosophy attached to yoga for many, many centuries and I can't challenge that. Yoga has a mystical element and an occult aspect also. However, the science of yoga as it has been propounded in India for thousands of years has something more to give to every person, and that contribution of yoga to human society is related to man's day-to-day life, where he faces sickness, stress, anxiety and other emotional or mental problems.

There are people who are interested in mystical, metaphysical and occult affairs, but I think that's a luxury. Sometimes it can be an escape for a society which is too poor or too rich. Still, mysticism is there and we don't have to work hard to destroy or criticize it. But what I want to talk about is the aspect of yoga which the individual in society can practise and utilize to help him in his day-to-day life. This is the view of yoga I have been trying to give people regarding hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, or even bhakti yoga, laya yoga or kundalini yoga.

In the last four or five decades, yoga has been examined in its various aspects either by sceptics or by its followers.

The sceptics examined yoga in order to denounce it, and the followers examined it in order to prove and establish it. The results of both groups have been more or less the same. They found that the practices of yoga, either in the form of hatha yoga or in the form of meditation, undoubtedly have beneficial effects on the human body and its processes.

Therefore, in India and in the West, I have been trying to attract attention to this scientific aspect of yoga without talking a lot about the mystical, spiritual, religious or metaphysical aspects.

Do you think that people are more attracted to hear about yoga if you discuss it from a scientific viewpoint? Is it more understandable to the average person?

It is changing from time to time. About twenty years ago it was very different in India. People did not care very much for the scientific aspects of yoga; they only cared for its metaphysical and mystical aspects. After 1964 I started talking a lot about it from street to street and from city to city, and now they are more interested in the scientific aspects of it than the mystical aspects. The whole theme has changed.

It is the same in Australia, which is totally involved in the scientific aspects of yoga. There they teach yoga in jails, in hospitals, in psychiatric hospitals, in schools and in many other places. That is in spite of the fact that we originally had a very ordinary establishment. Actually, we always keep a low profile. We don't go in for much publicity, though whatever is due, we do.

Now, across Australia, we have twenty-six well-established ashrams, and each ashram has at least three permanent teachers, in some cases many more. The ashrams have libraries, teaching systems, country properties, and they are full all the time.

The same applies to the Latin American countries where they had the same problem: a mystical, metaphysical, religious understanding of yoga. The Catholic church also thought it was a religion. I went there first in 1971 and we now have

many centres there. The church agrees that although yoga may have a religious undertone, the practices of yoga do have important scientific aspects.

In the South American countries, the church, as a whole, has accepted it. I am referring to the church because the government has never cared for yoga; it has neither accepted it nor denounced it. However, in the past, the church has been very active in acceptance and denunciation of both. In South America, the church has accepted yoga and now we teach it to nuns and priests, and in their schools, universities and hospitals.

Swami Vivekananda was invited to go to Colombia from India by the Jesuit priests, and his fare was paid by them. For two years, he and other swamis would go and teach the workers through a social service organization which was run by the church. He was also teaching priests, nuns and nurses. Father Londono, a chief Jesuit priest there, himself practises yoga. He came to India and lived with me and he understands that yoga has a positive effect on the human body and mind.

In America, there are many movements that have a mystical, metaphysical and religious flavour, and they practise and teach yoga in spite of that. However, I am trying to separate yoga as far as possible, to give it an academic and scientific shape in times to come. In the same way that we have developed medical science and psychology, yoga can be developed as a faculty without having anything to do with metaphysics, occultism or mysticism, so that in the course of time it can be taught as a science in the universities.

That is what I am trying to do. It has almost started. It hasn't taken final shape, but I hope it does. I am not against metaphysics or occultism, but when a faculty of yoga has to be created in the university or educational curriculum, one has to be very careful about adding, combining or integrating those aspects.

Will using a scientific basis for yoga so that the masses of people can understand it water it down and lose something in the process?

No, I think that even if it loses, it does not matter because in every age, human society goes by certain values and necessities. Today, at least in India, when the scientific investigations are concluded and yoga becomes a faculty, hundreds of thousands of boys and girls will be first initiated into the non-controversial aspect of yoga. When that has gone on for a generation or two and people have faith in yoga, the next generations can go ahead.

Today, the problem is that in every country there are controversial views about yoga, and as a result of that conflict, the masses are losers. Yoga is misinterpreted, and every organization talks about whatever it likes. Some say that through yoga you can go up and down, others say that through yoga you can fly this way or that way, others say that through yoga you can change the colour of the body, or through yoga you can have more of this and less of that.

There is no reason to criticize these views, but we have to take that view which people as a whole can accept. The schools, the colleges, the medical faculties, psychologists, psychotherapists and the people they serve, intellectuals and the masses both, must be convinced of the scientific value of yoga.

How do you propose to bring yoga to everybody, and make it a movement in which hundreds of thousands of children can participate?

The intellectuals, the scientists and the government authorities must have faith in me, that what I am teaching is not a cult, a religion or a sect, but an educative idea just like engineering skills, architectural skills, photographic skills, etc. I am teaching this skill, and it has done a good job so far.

For the first time in the recent history of India, yoga teaching has been integrated into the educational curriculum of the schools run by the central government, like your federal government here. In all their schools, all over India,

yoga teachers have been appointed two to each school. The central government of India is also financing many research programs through the Indian Council of Yoga Research & Medicine, and there are now many good research centres in India established in the last ten years.

In Denmark, they have declared yoga to be a part of national education. The Danish citizen is given the opportunity to learn yoga without any charge for the classes. A cadre of teachers has been appointed and they are paid by the government. In the United Kingdom, they have the British School of Yoga, which issues diplomas to competent teachers. Those teachers are then appointed by the counties to give classes free of cost. Things are developing in every country, and I am working on it. So, in the course of time, when people have faith in our teachings and systems, intellectuals, scientists and governments will definitely come to help.

I was reading that your approach helps people to individualize their yoga, and I was wondering what this means. Does it mean that there are certain postures that would be better for certain people and that certain people shouldn't do other postures?

The practices of yoga which help the body and mind, etc., have different effects. For example, the forward bending posture, paschimottanasana, is good for stimulating the pancreas, but if a person has disc degeneration of the spine, he has to avoid it. Instead, he should practise the cobra posture, bhujangasana.

In the same way, other practices of yoga such as kunjla kriya, drinking warm saline water then regurgitating it, are very beneficial for people suffering from asthma or from hyperacidity in its early stages, but if one has a peptic ulcer, one should not practise it. All these things should be properly studied, and we have done this.

According to the needs of the individual and his physical or mental problems, we create an appropriate yoga program. In the ancient Sanskrit texts these things

are already mentioned: who should practise these kriyas or asanas, at what time, and so forth. We teach yoga to individuals on that basis. Suppose we have five or ten people suffering from asthma, slipped disc, migraine and other illnesses. We can't teach them all together because we don't consider yoga as just exercises.

In our ashram in India we have about thirty teachers and they usually teach individuals, sometimes two in a class, but more often one by one. We do have general classes in which we have sixty, seventy or a hundred people, but usually in yoga therapy we go by the specific problem. We consider age also, for example, a young boy suffering from asthma and an aged person with asthma cannot be put in the same class. Even in the old books of yoga, the recommendations are on an individual basis – guru and disciple, not groups.

What are some of the other tools besides yoga that we can use to spiritualize the world?

The world has already been spiritual, according to the beliefs of the people. I hear it said in all societies, "Formerly the people were very good, now they are very bad." Apparently the people of earlier times were sufficiently spiritual or religious. In my opinion, this has not helped humanity because there was always more injustice and disparity in those societies which were religious and spiritual. There was also more fanaticism and suppression of individual rights and freedom.

First of all we have to define what spirituality is and what you mean by spirituality. If generosity is spirituality, okay, but if faith in canons, precepts and scriptures is spirituality, then I may hesitate to accept it. It may be only my opinion, but I have always found that people who do not know spirituality have always been nicer people. They are open-minded and free. They don't speak lies; they are never preoccupied with the limitations of each and every other individual, etc. Spiritual people have been very small-minded. They can't understand another person's right to be himself. They think that all the people have the same level of height. Therefore, we should

first define what we mean by spirituality, and then define the word spiritual.

Secondly, I don't think that the whole world can become spiritual. I see a process of evolution at all levels: the mental level, the emotional level, the intellectual level, the physical level, the socio-political-economic level and the scientific level. All the people are at different levels of evolution in the many aspects of their being, and this means that all people, the total humanity in the world, will never become evolved at the same level at the same time.

There will always be differences, grades, as well as diversities. If there were total similarity, the same type of people, all balanced, all good, I don't think society would function. Evolution in the world goes on by opposite forces, by pulling from both sides, not by uniformity.

So you believe that we can never spiritualize the whole world, that it's just an idealistic dream?

Not just idealistic, it is dangerous for humanity, because there has to be diversity. If you just plant roses and roses and roses all over San Francisco, how would it look? There have to be roses, there have to be hollyhocks and many other types of flowers. There have to be bushes with thorns – little bushes, big bushes, and trees.

You see, in order to make life and society beautiful, there has to be some sort of diversity. It is through the evil that the goodness is to be appreciated. If there were no evil, people could not understand goodness; if there were no wretched people, then saintliness would not be appreciated.

There is always the interplay of the three gunas: the sattvic forces, the rajasic forces and the tamasic forces. Whatever we might wish, that's alright. We'll wish for an absolutely spiritual society, but it cannot happen because the law of nature will not apply. The law of nature is not similarity; it is diversity – evolution. If everybody became sixty-five years of age tomorrow, if everybody suddenly became yellow, if everybody was fat, that's thinking the impossible.

I always visualize a society trying to fight, trying to create problems, trying to keep the peace, trying to find a better solution for each problem, sickness every day, new sciences every day. I believe in a pragmatic and real society based on conflict and harmony at the same time.

How long will you remain here in the United States?

I will be leaving for Europe in two days. This is my first time here in fourteen years. My previous tour of the United States was in 1968. I will be coming back to your country more often in the future as interest in yoga grows.

How do you find the United States after fourteen years?

There are now more people who want to know and practise yoga. In the last fourteen years many aspects of yoga have come to the United States, and on account of that people have become much more aware of this science. Nowadays, when I meet them, they want to simplify yoga; they don't want to get so much into the esoteric aspects. They want the simple aspects which can help them immediately in their day-to-day life and the tensions, stress and diseases resulting from these. Wherever I have been this time, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, they want me to come and stay there. They understand what I speak about because it is not too intellectual. Your country is now ready to practise this simplified yoga. That is why other swamis are here.

So you are stressing the use of yoga in holistic medicine?

I want yoga to be understood by everybody and to be used by everybody for their health, which means physical health, mind and emotions. I want yoga developed as a regular faculty, not just exercises like going to a swimming pool or a sauna bath. It must be based on the latest scientific investigations. I want science to study it. I know that jogging is good for the health, I know swimming is good, exercises are good too, but yoga is something else.

Yoga is very helpful in the treatment of serious diseases such as arteriosclerosis, certain types of cancer, respiratory problems,

mental and psychic problems, gastric problems, prolapse of disc or uterus or diseases caused by hormonal imbalances, etc. It is not just an additional item of health like tub baths and solar radiation. It is a chapter in medical science, if not a separate subject. You may call it preventing and promoting both, preventing sickness and promoting health. Each and every item, posture or aspect of yoga can be examined and the scientists can say, "We have proved that this is good for this."

Are there medical men who are studying and doing research on this?

Throughout the world this research work is going on, and day-by-day the investigations are increasing. There are very good studies that have been done on yoga. They have checked the changes taking place in the body at deeper levels, such as blood pressure, nervous system, brainwaves, etc. In the United States also, much research has been done in many areas of yoga, human physiology and illness. There has been especially good work done on meditation and its influence on the autonomic nervous system.

Do you think there is increasing interest in the scientific aspect of yoga, especially its application to medicine?

My guru was a doctor; my sister was a doctor who died before I took sannyasa. I had studied veterinary science in order to run my own cattle farm. Now I have many disciples who are doctors. Swami Vivekananda here is one. During my travels through the Indian subcontinent from 1956 to 1968, and throughout the world from 1968 up till now, I have found that science has an open mind, more so than medical science.

Yoga does not go by beliefs; it goes by investigations and discoveries. That is the reason I am more attracted to the scientific investigations, examinations and interpretations. I want to develop the scientific side of yoga with the help of open-minded examiners and investigators. Science has much to contribute to the good of humanity.

I think that the age of religious supremacy has gone. This is the age of science. Throughout the world, millions and millions of people are under the grip of a scientific process of thinking and it will grow more and more. So it is better that we go hand-in-hand with the people who are going to preside over the destinies of mankind tomorrow. Religion is not going to preside over the destiny of mankind, I'm absolutely sure about it. It is science, scientists and scientific thinking which will preside, whether the destiny is this way or that.

You have a very positive view of science. What do you think about the evil side of science, such as nuclear power, chemical waste dumping and other creations of science, that have brought many problems?

Man, his body and his mind will gradually adapt themselves. The physical body has a principle of adaptation. Just as Indians can drink water from a gutter and nothing happens to them, so in the course of decades we will all be able to develop the counter-metabolism in our systems, so that the gases and poisons being consumed will be neutralized by us. The human body can become resistant to even the most deadly poisons. Indians believe that humans can develop resistance to the extent that a deadly poison which can kill a man instantly can, by adaptation, become a part of his existence.

I am very optimistic and do not see any evil design, evil side or evil consequences of modern science. I can also say that man-made catastrophes in the past have killed many more people than we are contemplating here. We have accepted the past, so we must accept the present. This may be a new idea to Americans who have not been able to adjust to it, but in the course of time they'll have to. They'll have to think differently.

23

Interview

K.C.B.S. Radio, San Francisco, California, 10 September 1982.

I notice that your title is Swami. Is there a western equivalent of that term?

In the West, we are also known as swamis.

What kind of yoga do you teach, and what is it about your system of yoga that makes it different from other systems?

Yoga is an old science. The only difference in my teaching is that I have examined, studied and investigated yoga in the light of therapy, and that the scientific investigations carried out by me and by many others have confirmed the conclusion that the practices of yoga can treat many physical and psychological illnesses. This is the basic difference.

We know of yoga primarily as a preventative approach to health, but is there also a remedial aspect of the practice?

Yes curative, preventative and promotive, all three.

In the science of yoga, as you practise it, are there specific exercises, like a meditational technique, that you can outline so that we will get an idea? We see people sitting cross-legged on the floor meditating and many times we just have that impression of yoga. Obviously, there is much more to it than that.

In the last three decades, scientists and doctors all over the world have been conducting research on yoga postures, yoga breathing, yoga relaxation, yoga meditation, etc., and they have found definite physiological changes related to the nervous system, autonomic system, hormones, endocrine glands, inner body temperature, enzymes, skin resistance and many other things related to the body.

In mental illnesses, too, the investigators have found that the behaviour and subjective experience of people is definitely much better. It is not just the meditation, therefore, it is a combination of physical, mental and psychic practices.

The physical aspect of yoga, the physical exercises, are observable and I think more understood. The meditation aspect is beginning to be understood now in the United States, as more people are practising it. But the metaphysical aspects of yoga are still very much a mystery to us. I don't suppose there are shortcuts in a short interview like this by which you can tell me the secrets of the universe as you have discovered them through yoga. Is there something you can tell us, for those of us who are not familiar with the subject?

Well, leaving behind the physiological and therapeutic aspects of yoga, when you go beyond the mind and its limitations, the conclusions of yoga related to the universe, life, matter and energy are more or less parallel to the findings in the modern day physical sciences, especially the conclusions reached since Einstein: the theory of relativity and methodological concept of the mind in relation to time, space and object and quantum theory. They are also the discoveries of yoga, but in the realm of self-experience, not in the realm of investigation of matter, as scientists have been doing.

So there is a very close parallel between the physical sciences as we know them and yoga as you have experienced it?

Oh, yes. In fact, when yogic and vedantic philosophies were presented to a group of highly qualified scientists, they

could clearly understand them, just as much as I understand the theories of modern physics in relation to matter and energy, etc.

Your students consider you to have reached the highest state of enlightenment. How do they know that?

I think that disciples, devotees and students who come to me must be studying my behaviour and my mental forces being transmitted to them or being received by them. However, it is a question which I cannot adequately answer, because I am not aware of where I stand, whether I am an ordinary man, an elevated man or a liberated man, but I know that thousands of students all over the world have an opinion about me.

Is there a danger that they might worship you instead of reaching their full potential in discovering themselves?

Surely it can make itself into a religion in the course of time, but I am very careful about it. I tell my devotees, disciples and students over and over again that it is very important that they should view me as their guide, as their guru, as their teacher, not as God. They should not deify me in that sense and mystify my personality. As far as I can see, they accept it, though I don't know what is going to happen after I leave the body.

How do you view Jesus Christ and his experience on this earth?

Well, I was born a Hindu, so naturally I have the same respect for God, for Jesus, as any Christian has. The saints do not belong to a clime, to a time, a space or an age. They are beyond everything. After them, of course, we do codify the books and instructions, and in that way Jesus Christ was introduced to me when I was barely six. I read the Bible and lived with sisters and other Christians for a very long time. In fact, from the age of six to the age of sixty I have been close to them, and I think it is the fortune of mankind that

such a man was born, who was given to man for his spiritual guidance and total inspiration.

I think that many of us living in the United States, in a metropolitan area like the San Francisco Bay area, with the technology that we have all around us, with the freeways and the smog and the noise, are more in need of yoga than people who live in the mountains of India and have a quieter and more peaceful existence in their surroundings. However, it is also very difficult at times for people living in the hustle and bustle to become attuned to themselves and to find that peace. Do you have some suggestions for people who are seeking that peace, but living in this very complex, crowded world?

Whether one lives in calm and quiet solitude or in the hustle and bustle of city life, there are branches of yoga which are suitable for the evolution of consciousness. In the cities like this, where we are subjected to stress and strain, noise, smog and other pollution, the practices of yoga can transform the quality of our physiology and mind, and help us to adjust to the environment.

Are there some specific types of yogic exercises or meditation that are helpful in this situation?

It mainly depends on the temperament of the individual. There are people who are predominantly emotional, psychic, dynamic or rational by temperament. They all do best with different types of yoga. Therefore, there are branches of yoga such as bhakti yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga and jnana yoga, and for mystic types of people there is kundalini yoga. People have to find the right yoga for themselves according to their needs.

You have obviously met some very important world leaders and they have spoken with you. Some I hope have learned from you. Is there anything that they or any other single individual can do by developing their mind to actually

change the course of history and the things that we see happening in our world?

Sri Aurobindo was a political leader and when he took to yoga, he made a new direction for humanity. Mahatma Gandhi also began a new philosophy. In the same way, there may be many people throughout the world who may not be disclosing their relationship and identity with the inner light, but who might be the guiding force behind world events.

Part of the mystique of yoga grows out of the stories we hear of yogis who have been buried alive in coffins and placed under the earth for a number of days. Then they dig these people up and, as if they had been hibernating, they come back to life. Are those just tricks, or is there a meaningful reason for that type of demonstration of the extreme possibilities of yoga?

Formerly, we thought that they were tricks, that these people were charlatans. But in the last few years, science has been able to study these things and has come to the conclusion that it is possible to stop the activities of the heart and suspend the life force through conscious effort. The medical scientists who investigated such cases have certified that the person is clinically dead, and then is resurrected.

Through hatha yoga, *prana*, which is the life force, can be controlled by the mental force. So through their conscious will, the yogis withdraw their life force but remain conscious for a period of time. At that time, the consciousness remains in the form of light awareness. The yogi, when he is hibernating, is aware of the light, not of his ego. The ego is converted into light, like effulgence, and he keeps on with the awareness of this effulgence for a period of time, say ten days. Later, with the help of this awareness, he links himself to the body and comes out.

Formerly we thought it was a sort of feat, although it was genuine, and that they did it to gain fame and popularity. But now when we look into the medical sciences, we see

that a lot of coronary accidents are taking place. I have been requesting the medical scientists to investigate this phenomenon and try to find a method by which coronary accidents could thus be avoided and heart attacks could be given a new direction. Maybe it will succeed. So far, we don't see any positive benefit from this phenomenon, but I am sure that some definite scientific advantage will come.

Do you do some of these feats?

I did. I have practised pranayama for a long time.

When you were in a motionless state, suspended?

Yes, suspended emotion, and I can also control the emotions and brainwaves. If I am examined scientifically, they will not find any emotional charges – that is through conscious will. I have also done suspension of breath, but I found that although it is an important feat, it does not bring about a transformation in the quality of mind and human emotions, which are more important for a better world.

As we study yoga, as we become more aware of our inner selves, what is our goal in this world? Are we studying yoga to make our lives and the lives of the people around us and this world better? Or are we developing our spirits for another world, another place, another time?

I think it is both. First of all, by the practice of yoga we are improving the opportunities of our individual life. Secondly, we are trying to create a quality of mind which would be able to judge the events of the world and the persons in it in such a way that we won't act hastily and in a violent manner, but more rationally. Then the problems will be solved with greater patience and understanding of other people.

However, finally, the consciousness, the individual self that we are, is subject to a process of evolution in the realm of nature, so a better quality of individual is reproduced. Since transmigration, life after death, is a reality and is not a controversial matter, I think that yoga has three purposes to

fulfil: individual evolution, evolution of society and evolution related to transmigration (the afterlife).

Can anyone take up the practices of yoga or is there some sort of initiation rite that one must go through in terms of preparing to begin?

So far as the system of yoga is concerned, there is no ritual or initiation, but there has to be aspiration, there has to be keenness and proper understanding. Those are much more important than ceremony or initiation.

Do the people who practise yoga in this country have any discernible qualities that we would be able to distinguish as they walk on the street or ride the train?

I don't think so because the difference that they will develop in a short period will not be noticeable. It is very difficult to change the personality and the quality of a person. However, if we can judge their minds, we will see a difference. To think better is easier than to act better.

Do you advocate fasting?

Yes, I like it. I myself have been fasting for the last forty years, every Tuesday without fail, no matter where I am. I like fasting very much because I think it is a type of yoga, and if it is not a type of yoga, it is conducive to the effects of yoga.

Do you take water when you fast?

Yes, I do take water.

Do you do it for a twenty-four hour period every Tuesday?

I miss breakfast and lunch, so I fast from the evening meal on Monday to the evening meal on Tuesday.

You look very healthy.

Well, it is not important if I look healthy; it is more important if I feel healthy and if I live healthily.

So you would recommend fasting in a general sense, but each individual would have to find their own method for themselves for it to be beneficial?

I think everybody would be benefited by fasting, except those who suffer from peptic ulcer or hyperacidity, or one of the emaciating diseases where the metabolism is very fast.

Some people fast for long periods of time. There are biblical accounts of people fasting for forty days. Are there benefits in long fasts?

I have fasted for periods of forty days in silence, in inner meditation, and I have found that it can make things very clear about yourself, about the universe, about body, mind, thought, the past, the present, the future society and people. It brings clarity without having to go through fears.

I can only observe you on the outside. I can't see within you, but you seem to have a peace about you. You seem to be comfortable with yourself. I wonder if the transition from your everyday surroundings in India to the hustle, bustle, smog and noise levels of these cities affects you. Are you more, as we say, uptight here?

I live in India for ten to fifteen days a month. At other times, I am in Europe, America, South America, Australia, Japan or other parts of Asia. You are right in so far as you have judged me. I am basically very peaceful with myself, but it may also be due to the fact that I am so confident of things that are to come.

How do you mean? Which things that are to come?

I get a sort of vision and direction from time to time, so I am very sure about many things. I usually keep myself under the guidance of that inner voice of the human being. This has brought me to a point where I think I have been able to serve society in my own way and have used the greater part of my life profitably and successfully.

Are you optimistic about the human race?

Very much. I think sometimes that I am a little bit more than optimistic.

Sometimes, we hear more of the doomsday prophets who say that there is a moral decline, there is a spiritual decline, that the human race is self-destructive, that we have created the technological means of our own destruction, that the fabric of our society and the family have deteriorated to the point that individuals are not growing and the race is not moving ahead, but you don't feel that?

Well, in this public answer, it is difficult for me to say that they are wrong and I am right, but I can say what I feel without saying they are wrong. I think that morality is a very relative concept and in my opinion, morality must be related to the evolution of inner consciousness. Whichever life you may lead, if there is evolution of your inner consciousness, related to yourself and the cosmos, I would say that is morality. If your morality just gives you some sort of religious life or keeps you a dunce and a blockhead, if it doesn't lead to real evolution, I wouldn't say that it is a valid morality.

In the last fifty years that I can remember, in India as well as abroad, the spiritual awareness has grown tremendously. There is a fantastic discovery by people of the spiritual nature, not only in India, America and Europe, but everywhere. People are becoming yoga-orientated, meditation-orientated. They are trying to discover the reality behind experiences. They are going to ashrams and yoga classes, and the teachers are having a very good opportunity to serve them.

These are the indications that man is now becoming a seeker. It may even be partly due to the modern technological stress and strain, but if such stresses can help to bring you and me closer to that discovery of the higher self, let it be, let it happen. After all, it is important to discover something real behind the so-called appearances. I am optimistic and I think that humanity as a whole is going to discover the

reality within, through yoga, and even through the religions if they improve.

I'm a reporter by nature as well as by profession. My job has been to try to communicate and pass on my impressions of the things that I see in the world around me. What you are talking about is an evolution. It is very spiritual and, as it is an internal thing, it is difficult to report on. Is there any kind of advice that you can give me if I set a goal to report on the spiritual evolution of people? How might I go about doing that?

External concepts are indications of spiritual evolution. Even just a few centuries ago, people did not have the freedom where they could stand to fight for justice, or give expression to passions, visions and aspirations, good or bad. Great changes have occurred in these spheres in recent years, and these external indications and symptoms are manifestations of an inner evolution.

You know what used to happen just a few hundred years ago. Scientists were not safe, rich people were not safe, women and children were not safe. Now we live in an era when a person can be himself and manifest his own inner realizations without fear of persecution or even ridicule. This is the sign of a rapidly evolving society, which is an expression of the similarly rapid evolution of the individuals within it.



24

Self-Experience: The Yogic Aim

Unitarian Church, San Francisco, California, 10 September 1982.

There was a boy who had a spectacular experience one day. He began to feel that he was dying, and he experienced that he was dead. But over and above that he was the spectator of the entire process of death and state of death. At that time the boy began to think, “Who is dead, and who is the seer of death?” And this was the main issue of his quest throughout his life. This boy was later known as Ramana Maharshi and he used to teach that the seer and the perception are not identical and not the same. I think that the world by now knows about Sri Ramana Maharshi. But if you don’t yet know about him, please find out who he was.

The same thing happened to another lad who experienced disembodied consciousness when he was only six. He saw his body, but he did not feel it. The consciousness and the frame which was having the consciousness were experienced separately by him. This experience occurred again when he was ten. His parents tried to locate the cause of this abnormal experience. Fortunately, in those days there were not a great many doctors or psychotherapists or even mental hospitals, so the boy had to be left at the mercy of nature. If he became insane, well and good, and if he survived, it was God’s grace.

However, when the boy went to a saintly lady a few weeks after the second experience, that saintly lady looked at him and said, “You must experience it more and more,” and instructed the father of the lad that he should be totally exposed to spiritual associations, personalities and ideas. That lad was myself.

The questioning began after that. I wanted to know what the experience was and what it could ultimately give me, and if I wanted to have that experience on my own, what was the way? That led me to the study of yoga, Vedanta and traditional systems. Finally, at the age of eighteen I came across a lady of thirty-six who, in my opinion, was God-sent.

She initiated me into the practical side of tantra and exploded the same experience once again. But, to me, that was not all. I knew now that a saint or a guru, or the laws of nature, could give me the experience, but I wanted to have it on my own. I also wanted to be sure that it was not the mental imposition of that person, or a bad or good spirit possessing me, some sort of satanic manifestation, or a kind of hallucination or self-delusion.

Although I had almost completed my university education in philosophy and veterinary sciences, I took to the tantric sciences because that lady also could not properly explain my experience. She only said, “I can teach you some kriyas, the practices by which you can evolve the same quality of consciousness.” I asked her, “But what am I going to get out of that?” And she couldn’t answer the question though I needed to understand my experiences.

By that time I also knew a lot about the theory of natural evolution responsible for the growth of the body, the mind and matter. I involved myself in deeper studies and in Sanskrit and realized that there is the possibility of expansion of mind on account of the process of evolution and psychic matter; and when the mind can expand, a certain amount of energy is liberated. But that was still all theory. It was just a rationalistic approach to the episodes that had taken place in my life.

I left home without any plan or program. I did not know where to go. First I went to my sister who guided me to her guru, a nice person. He taught me a lot of tantric practices, theories, mantras, yantras and mandalas. For six months I did nothing but learn, but one day I thought, “No, this is not what I’m after”. I left that place and ultimately, to be brief, I found my guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati.

The moment I entered his ashram, everything changed. My mind became absolutely quiet and tranquil. It seemed neither to function nor to cease. Where it was, I did not know. I did not have to wonder whether he was my guru or not my guru; I just accepted him. I lived with him for a period of twelve years, and then he told me to go out into the world, a beautiful world with endless varieties, and for me a world which is an expansion of a greater beauty. I find great satisfaction in being one with this world and this life.

Expansion

The practices of tantra are known as yoga. The traditional name of the philosophy of the system is tantra, and the practices which are taught for the expansion of mind and the liberation of energy are known as yoga. Thus, the practices of hatha yoga, mantra, kundalini yoga, laya yoga, kriya yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, all these various yogas, about which we know a lot from our gurus and from our teachers, are the practicals of tantra. It is actually these practices which help us to expand our consciousness.

What is expansion of consciousness? When mind expands, you begin to have non-objective experiences. Ordinarily, the mind functions through the medium of the senses so that you see through the eyes, hear through the ears and you feel through the tactile senses. However, there can come a moment when the senses are no longer necessary. You can hear without the ears and you can see without the eyes, and the inner perception becomes clearer and clearer. The objectivity of experience is completely eliminated and the inner experience appears as an objective experience.

According to tantra, consciousness is not abstract; mind is not abstract. But emotions, fears, passions, memories and all the other psychological stuff that we know are not the mind. They are merely expressions of the mind. What we know about the mind, or what we think the mind is, is not the mind. In order to know the mind we have to go beyond the external forms, beyond the objects and completely beyond the sense experiences.

If you can't go beyond the sense experiences and transcend the realm of matter, you cannot possibly come to know the mind. The mind is a very amazing energy, but in order to know it and to handle it, you will have to expand it. That expansion is a very important process. The moment your consciousness becomes free from the realm of sense objects, when you begin to transcend the objective awareness, the sounds fade away, the forms become lost to you and, as your personal ego becomes gradually diminished, the mind expands.

Self-experience

Of course, all of our experiences come from within. Even the sense experiences we have from day-to-day are inherent in the mind, not in the object itself. This has been told to us time and again by scientists, philosophers and metaphysicians. Even this experience which you are having right now, at this moment, listening to me and seeing me, is a subjective experience which you are having in an objective manner. The whole function is totally inherent in you. The flowers you see, or the smell you experience, they are not inherent in the object. The mind has the capacity to experience exactly in the same way when the objects are withdrawn.

At that time an experience takes place which is known as self-experience and this is the ultimate purpose of the practices of yoga. In the beginning, the self-experience is in the form of feeling. Gradually, however, you amplify it and it comes to you in the form of vision. When you amplify it again, it comes to you in the form of images. Again you amplify it and it comes to you in the form of a total, true objective experience.

The thing which you have in your consciousness is seen by you as a separate reality, a separate existence, and this is called *darshan*, divine vision, or heavenly sound or music of the spheres, it has many names. This is the extent to which the yogic practices and the tantric practices can take you.

Shiva and Shakti

Now, the important thing is this – is an experience born of matter, or is it born of consciousness? If an experience is born of matter, then it is matter which is important – that is called materialism. However, if experience is inherent in consciousness, then it is the consciousness which is important and that is called spirituality. That is the basic difference between the philosophy of materialism and the philosophy of spirituality.

Matter and consciousness are interacting with each other and ordinarily you cannot realize either one independently, but by the practices of yoga these two aspects of nature or creation can be seen separately. The consciousness can be separated from matter. What is matter? What you experience through the senses, what you experience by the duality of the mind, what you experience in waking, what you experience in dreams, and what you experience in sleep, that is called matter.

Consciousness and matter (a form of energy) are known in tantra as Shiva and Shakti, and as I said before, they are interacting with each other. As a result of that interaction, duality comes into being. During the practices of yoga these two aspects have to be separated, and when they are separated, the experience takes place. This is precisely the purpose and the mission of yoga.

Threefold awakening

Ordinarily, we think that the yoga postures and pranayamas are physical exercises and that meditation is a spiritual exercise. It is not true. Swami Sivananda used to tell me that when you practise asana, the awakening happens in the chakras; when you practise pranayama, the awakening takes

place in sushumna; and when you practise meditation, the awakening of kundalini takes place in mooladhara chakra. He used to talk about it as 'the threefold awakening'.

You must have a road and you must have a car, and you must have a driver. In the same way, the awakening of the chakras must take place and only then should the awakening of kundalini take place. These are three different matters, not one and the same, and without the awakening of sushumna, the kundalini awakening has no channel. Hence, the practices of hatha yoga, of pranayama, of mantra, of kriya yoga, etc., all ultimately awaken the different aspects I have talked about, and then awakening of kundalini takes place.

Therefore, the functional purpose of the yogic practices is to awaken the kundalini. Some call it expansion of mind, others call it awakening of kundalini. It has various names, and it is this yoga which I have been trying to teach for many years. The practices of tantra and yoga may or may not give you samadhi, the *nirvikalpa* state, the higher state, but definitely one thing is certain, when we are practising yoga, the consciousness is evolving, and this evolution of consciousness will ultimately reflect upon the character of the whole world.

Yoga was developed not so much for the sake of therapy, or even for the sake of samadhi, but those wise people who gave it to us knew that when you practise yoga, the pace of evolution is accelerated in the individual. Then, when thousands and millions of people practise yoga, the pace of evolution of everybody will be accelerated and the quality of society will be improved.

In my opinion, yoga is one of the best tools in order to help the advancement of humanity through the evolution of spirituality in man. Each and every day, a few hatha yoga practices, some mantra and meditation should be done so that you can transcend the individuality of the mind and ultimately so that your consciousness can visualize the whole area of the universe.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What is sushumna?

In the tantric tradition and in the hatha yoga tradition, they talk about three nadis which run within the framework of the spine. On the left flows *ida nadi*, which represents the mental force in the body, consciousness, and on the right flows *pingala nadi*, which represents the pranic or vital force in the body.

In the centre is *sushumna*, which represents the spirit or the spiritual force within us. In most people it is dormant, but it can wake up. The awakening can take place in many ways, but the most important and effective method is pranayama.

Can you get awakening just by meditation, or do you need to do the other practices of yoga as well?

One can awaken kundalini through meditation and one can also awaken sushumna through meditation. There is no controversy about it. However there are problems. Firstly, when there is awakening and the mind begins to expand, the karma, the samskaras, the qualities of life and the personality come in front of the aspirant in the form of psychosis and neurosis and one finds it very difficult to face them in spite of the awakening of kundalini. For this reason karma yoga is advised as well as bhakti yoga.

Secondly, certain changes occur in the body related to the temperature, metabolism, blood pressure, coronary behaviour, brain waves, etc. If hatha yoga is not practised, if the physical body and its processes are not organized properly, then there is the possibility of the yogi becoming sick.

If a person has damage to his spine, is there any danger if one of his chakras is awakened?

Spinal damage is anatomical, but these chakras are the subtle realms or the subtle forms of energy. Therefore, even if there

is some sort of damage in the structure of the spine, it does not make any difference in so far as the forms of energy are concerned.

Are the awakening of sushumna and enlightenment the same thing?

Awakening of sushumna brings one degree of enlightenment. Enlightenment takes place in degrees. Even when you are just practising hatha yoga and your chakras are getting awakened, you have some sort of enlightenment. You can see forms, you can see visions, you can grasp thought waves, etc. It is also enlightenment, but of an inferior quality.

Awakening of each of the chakras also produces different kinds of experiences, with the enlightenment from ajna being perhaps the greatest. Then, when awakening takes place in sushumna, you have another enlightenment; you can see angels, gods, goddesses, etc., but that is also not the superior kind of enlightenment.

The highest enlightenment takes place when kundalini wakes up. You have different types of enlightenment as it passes through the various chakras. Then, as it passes up through sushumna, you have another type of enlightenment, and finally, when it unites in sahasrara chakra, the highest chakra, that is considered to be final or ultimate enlightenment.

By ultimate enlightenment, do you mean union with God?

It's the same: ultimate enlightenment, union with God, vision of God, experiencing superconsciousness, etc., these are all just names. You can use any name you like. They are just expressions and one expresses them according to one's understanding. Most of us understand God and so we say God-experience, but those people who don't believe in God (there are people like that) may say superconsciousness or cosmic consciousness. They are just expressions. It is the same thing.

Who is God?

I don't know. I really don't know. I am not making a joke. That question has been posed in the Upanishads, in many analytical books in India, and many times enquirers have asked it. In the Vedic scriptures also it is said, "Who created Him?" However, it is a transcendental question, and transcendental questions can only be answered by a transcendental mind and can only be understood by a transcendental brain.

Can you get enlightenment by taking drugs?

You can get certain experiences, but you can't retain them. Drugs weaken the nervous system, cause depressions, disturb the hormones and affect the circulatory system. As a result, later on, the experiences almost dwindle into nothing.

In the beginning, some of the drugs do affect the processes of brain and consciousness, either directly or through other parts of the nervous system. If we could perpetuate these experiences for many years, it would be nice. However, I have found that in the course of time the body and physical organs become very weak, and as a result of that the later experiences are obsessed by fears, doubts and passions.

What is the use of having a high state after which you fall in a ditch? I don't disagree with people trying these things now and then, but I think you must try to create the change within consciousness, through the medium of consciousness, if you want to be able to maintain the experience.

If a person has some damage from taking drugs, can some of that damage be corrected through yoga practices?

I don't have personal experience of all the drugs, of course, but I can tell you very frankly about myself. Until 1946, I had never given myself to drugs. I hadn't thought it was necessary for me because I didn't want to escape life. I was never lonely. Life was always enjoyable for me, my people were good and the people of my country are also very good.

However, in 1946 I went to Gangotri, about 10,500 feet up in the Himalayas, above the snowline where the river Ganges

starts. I had originally gone there to practise pranayama, but I started to smoke marijuana. I smoked it day in and day out, all day and all night. I saw angels, devils, rishis, everything. I saw the universe; I saw the whole world. I even saw what is happening to me now in my own life, which I didn't plan or imagine. They were true experiences.

However, when I came back down to the ashram, my guru, Swami Sivananda, could not even recognize me. I was white like marble, and I was coughing a lot because the drug had damaged my left lung. I was sick for six months or more, really sick. Eventually I got better with the help of a natural life, working hard, practising asanas and pranayamas and the hatha yoga shatkarmas. It is especially necessary if people want to get off drugs and experience the true quality of meditation that they should practise the hatha yoga *shatkarmas*, the six systems of purifying the body and energy centres.

In meditation, does it matter which mantra you use?

Whichever mantra you use in meditation, you should continue to use the same one and should not change it. That is important. If the mantra is succeeding, is creating gradual transformation and is helping you to attain tranquillity, peace of mind and unification, then it is the right mantra.

In case the mantra is creating some sort of mental, psychological or emotional problem, then it is necessary to consult someone on the basis of your astrological sign and have the proper mantra. If the mantra is working well, it is much better to keep quiet and continue the same as an experiencer or a seer. So, whichever one you find easier, go ahead and practise it.

25

Integrate your Yoga Sadhana

Yoga Society of San Francisco, San Francisco, California, 11 September 1982.

I have been wandering for the past thirty-five years in order to introduce yoga into the lives of people in the East as well as in the West. That is what my guru, Swami Sivananda, told me to do in 1956 on 19th March at 9 am in the morning. He said, “Go away from the ashram and take the message of yoga from door to door and from shore to shore.”

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, we find that in the eighteenth chapter Sri Krishna asks Arjuna, “Have you understood what I have been telling you?” Arjuna pauses for a while, then says, “Yes, I have understood; I have gained knowledge through your grace, and I stand freed from doubts. I shall therefore carry out your bidding.” That is the attitude of the disciple on the path of yoga.

Yogas in the *Gita*

The path of the mundane life ends with reasoning, with intellectualism. And when reason has failed and intellect cannot produce the supramental experiences any more, the last thing is called *prasad*, the grace that comes from the guru, the grace that comes from within your own self.

The path of yoga, therefore, does not begin with yama and niyama alone. They are the first steps in raja yoga, but

not in yoga itself. Raja yoga is not yoga, it is a faculty of yoga. There are various faculties of yoga: karma yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, etc. In the *Bhagavad Gita* they talk about eighteen faculties of yoga.

Where does yoga begin and where do you begin to aspire in life, and where do you end with yoga? In the *Bhagavad Gita* there is a reference to raja yoga. Lord Krishna says, “This is the *raja vidya*, the royal science; it is the highest and the best; it is the supreme secret.” He does not denounce raja yoga, but he also doesn’t say that raja yoga is the only yoga. He also talks about karma yoga, but does not say that it is the only yoga, nor jnana yoga, nor Samkhya yoga, nor bhakti.

In the *Gita*, it seems that yoga does not begin with yama and niyama. It doesn’t even begin with asanas and pranayama, nor does it begin with ethics, morality or the puritanism of religions. It doesn’t begin with lofty resolutions. In fact, the lofty resolutions that Arjuna makes are not given in the first chapter but in the last, when the instructions on yoga are finished. It is then that man makes lofty resolutions, and then yoga comes to an end and jnana begins, experience begins. Yoga is not the end; it is the means.

However, in saying that yoga is the means, you must not belittle it. You can’t say that yoga is the means until you practise it, until you understand what it means. There has to be a total understanding of the personality of the person for whom you are practising yoga. You are not practising yoga for your cult or for my ashram, or because you are a swami or a sannyasin or a disciple of a sannyasin. You are practising yoga for the evolution of yourself and who you are.

Are you just the physical body? Are you just the intellect? Are you just the heart and the emotions? Are you just the totality of your circumstances in life? Are you just a product of destiny? You have to find out what you are. Therefore, the *Bhagavad Gita* is considered to be the epitome of yoga.

Balancing the symptoms

When does yoga begin? Yoga begins with nervous breakdown and ends with sannyasa. When you renounce the idea of being the ‘doer’, then liberation begins. Yoga passes through the highway of yama and niyama, but doesn’t begin with them. Somewhere on your way you come across a milestone, a junction, a freeway; it’s called raja yoga – yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi. But it is a mistake that most people make to think that yoga begins when you become religious. No. Yoga begins wherever you are and whoever you are.

What was the condition of Arjuna? In the first chapter of the *Gita* it describes his symptoms, those of nervous breakdown. He says, “Lord . . . my limbs give way and my mouth is parched, my frame shakes, and my hair stands on end. The bow, Gandiva, drops from my hand and my skin burns all over; my mind is reeling and I am not able to even stand.” This is the breakdown of the autonomic nervous system.

You have to remember that yoga begins when the scales are heavily loaded against you, when the mind is undergoing a state of terrible tension and in the grip of fear, and when you are terribly angry, when your mind is stormed by passions. What do you do then? You try to balance those symptoms of the mind, and that is the beginning of yoga – when you are trying to balance them.

Step by step

However, meditation alone cannot solve the complex problems of life, though it is a very important science. In the *Bhagavad Gita* and other texts on yoga, dhyana has been eulogized. The *Kaivalya Upanishad* says, “By churning the mind through meditation, the pandit, the great man, burns all sins.” So it is in many scriptures.

Dhyana has a place in the scheme of the evolution of man, in the scheme of the transformation of the quality of his life, but when you want to get out of the grossness of life,

when you want to uplift yourself from the darkest region of *avidya*, of ignorance, the first thing is Samkhya yoga. Then, step by step the others come. Then comes karma yoga, then raja yoga, then bhakti yoga, etc.

I am putting all this before you in order to give you a glimpse of what type of yoga I am thinking about and about which I talk. I have no particular insistence on any type of yoga and I don't live for it. If I teach yoga, and if I work for it, then I am propagating a cult. When you work for an idea or a philosophy, then it becomes a cult. What is important is not yoga itself, but man's life, his problems and his evolution.

We have found that the various paths of yoga, when they are integrated properly according to the personality of the individual, can definitely help one to evolve from the gross to the transcendental. It is therefore important for all of us to have a thorough and complete understanding about all the faculties of yoga. Let us not make a mistake by standing for one type only.

Some talk about hatha yoga, others about raja yoga, and there are many people who say that bhakti yoga is the easiest and the best, surest and cheapest form of yoga. There is no doubt about it, but let us not be lopsided, because we are not merely head, heart or hand. We are a combination of all three and so are our problems.

A physical problem may well be generated from your inner self. So, a few drugs here, a few pills there cannot solve man's problems. A few asanas here or a few pranayamas there will not do so either. They are eyewashes. You take a pill and your headache becomes alright, but the cause is not alright. It remains; you have only suppressed the symptoms. In the same way, people are only suppressing the symptoms of the diseases of life. Just using hatha yoga when you get sciatica or digestive problems only helps for the time being, but the cause is still there. I'm not belittling hatha yoga; I teach it.

Jnana yoga is also not the panacea for all the ills of life. Just asking, "Who am I?", is it enough? Is it not a process of

hypnotism? Where does jnana yoga begin? With the *Brahma Sutras*, with *Viveka Chudamani* or with the Upanishads? No. Jnana yoga does not begin just by reading the books and the scriptures. The first sutra in the *Brahma Sutras* makes it very clear. It says, “Now, therefore, we enquire into the nature of *Brahman*, of the Supreme Reality.”

The words ‘now, therefore’ mean that we have already purified our minds through karma yoga, and we have achieved concentration through bhakti yoga, and we have stabilized the consciousness through raja yoga. Now, we have the right to enquire into the nature of Brahman with the help of the great books of jnana yoga. In this way, a composite synthesis has to be struck if we want to grow in spiritual life.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

I’ve practised some very extreme practices and undergone some unusual experiences. Now, not knowing how I do it, I find myself living through the same time period. I have lived through my last years several times. I don’t know what causes it, except that it is related to the previous experiences and I don’t know when it will come on. Sometimes I feel very scared. Sometimes I think it’s wonderful; sometimes I think I’m going crazy. What is happening?

My reply to you now is directly personal. On account of you trying to concentrate the mind, these symptoms have exploded. Now the next step for you would be to practise antar mouna and observe impartially the passing of the distressing experiences of the mind without being affected by them. If you find them difficult to experience, then it would be much better for you to find a teacher and go to him. He will teach you how to be impartial to the experiences of the mind.

Not only you, but many people here in this part of the country, try to control the impulses of the mind and as a result have a lot of suffering like this. The present day mind is different from the mind of a hundred years ago. It was easy to control the sattwic mind; it became one-pointed very easily

and if it wandered, it could be brought back by force. The rajasic mind, however, which is tossing here and there like a shuttlecock, should not be controlled. If you control it, then you cause more and more conditions of schizophrenia.

You must assume another outlook towards the mind. That is, whatever is happening there, the mental experience, whether you like it or not, just watch it impartially. This is *antar mouna*, a vedantic *sadhana*. You should try to be a witness to the expressions of the senses, to the expressions of the mind, to the expressions of the emotions, and to disidentify yourself. Do not become the thinker, but just become the seer of your thoughts. In the beginning you will have some difficulty, but in the course of time you will be able to manage it.

I become sick whenever I lose someone who is close to me, and the sickness lasts for a long time, sometimes weeks, sometimes months. I have not succeeded in learning how to come to terms with this. Sometimes I arrive at some kind of mental acceptance, but I still become physically sick.

I remember a story. There was a swami living in a little hut and he had a neighbour next door. One day the neighbour's goat died and he went crying to the swami. The swami said, "Stop crying. What does it matter if your goat is dead? The soul is immortal, and besides, you must learn how to relinquish your attachment." With such advice, he pacified the neighbour, who left feeling much better.

One day, about a year later, the neighbour saw the swami crying, so he said, "What's the matter?" The swami answered, "My cow has died." Then the neighbour said, "Hey, wait a minute. Last year, when I was crying over the death of my goat, you told me all about its immortal soul and about the problems with attachment. And now you yourself are crying over the same thing. What's the difference?" The swami said, "The goat was yours, but the cow was mine."

You see, there has to be the realization of the true relationship between people, whether they love each other or hate each other, and that has to be practised over the course of

time. We know this as sannyasins; we live far from our families, we haven't seen them for years. But when something happens to the people whom we know, there is that link through which all the agony passes to us. Swami Sivananda used to tell us that sannyasins should not have any link with anybody at all, but many disciples of his and many of my disciples were not able to maintain that.

We have links with other people because of certain motives; it is a kind of selfishness. We can't be totally unselfish, so we are still very much affected by that. However, I think that if you expose yourself to satsang or if you practise the total experience of the agony which you are going through, the dejection, the sorrow, the loss, without trying to control it, let it happen, you may be able to get to a point of detachment.

Love and sympathy might be a strong part of your nature, and attachment and infatuation might be a part of it too. How do you get rid of that? It's not that easy. Therefore, when you undergo an experience of that type, you should allow your mind to have that experience. I think that every time it happens, you are trying to balance yourself, and this attempt to balance the mind under stress might be the reason that you are not able to have the experience of detachment.

When you practise japa, does it matter if you repeat the mantra mentally or out loud? Is it alright if you start verbally and then continue with it mentally?

When you practise japa of your mantra, you must remember that you are not practising concentration. Mantra is a combination of sounds, and sound is an energy force. The sound energy gets transformed according to the states of mind and even if you do not concentrate your mind on an image or an idea, even if your mind is dissipated and distracted and you are thinking of a hundred and one things during the japa, it does not matter.

Mantra is a Sanskrit word which is explained as 'by the repetition of which the mind is liberated from its identifications'. The moment you start to practise mantra, the

deeper contents of the mind start to expose themselves like a mental laxative. Some mantras are very strong, like purgatives. Thoughts just pour out of the unconscious. Archetypes come up in bunches and you can't handle them. Therefore, when you are practising mantra, just be very casual.

If you take an hallucinogenic drug, do you try to concentrate, or does concentration just take place? You don't have to do anything, do you? It is the same when you repeat a mantra. The concentration just happens by itself, and if it doesn't happen by itself, it means that a lot has to come out; you have to purge the deep-rooted *samskaras* out of yourself.

You can practise mantra loudly; you can sing the mantra; you can write the mantra; you can whisper it. You can also think it mentally; you can coordinate it with the breath; you can imagine it ascending and descending between the navel and the throat; you can practise it in *sushumna*, it doesn't matter. The important thing is: do not interfere with the purging process which takes place during your mantra chanting. No matter what comes up, just let it come. Its meaning does not matter; it's just karma.

I was stopped at the gate; I arrived too early. It's just as if you go to a museum or a library which opens at ten o'clock and you arrive there at eight o'clock. You have to wait for two hours. Similarly, without working out the total karma, desires and passions, these essential and obligatory experiences in life, we can't attain it. I read this book and that book. I was very active. I said, "I must be liberated now, in this very lifetime, so I'll work hard on meditation, on *sadhana*." And by sheer will, I was able to go to the gate, but it was locked. It opens only for the person who is without karma.

Therefore, it is necessary for everybody that all the experiences of the mind should be properly accepted, whether it is submission, passion, violence, love, charity, purity, an obscene experience or a beautiful experience. Whether it concerns family, friends or others, you must see each and every *samskara*, every latent impression

responsible for this life and the life afterwards. It is not just concentration, it is not just closing the eyes. I think that is a very Western concept: "Close the eyes, look within, and see the glory and the light." It is not like that. You cannot see unless you remove the cataract.

If you allow this process to happen and you see things within yourself and you watch them, at what point do you not allow some of those thoughts to manifest in actions? Suppose you see yourself having a desire, do you just watch it, or do you go ahead and experience the desire?

If you watch the desire, you will never enact it. But if you suppress the desire, you will definitely enact it, if not in this life, in the next life.

I have been practising kriya yoga since 1976 and I am finding that as I learn to concentrate better, I am becoming more sensitive to things and a lot more things make me ill. I became much more sensitive to meat, alcohol and marijuana, so I gave them up, but now I am becoming more sensitive to finer and finer things.

Kriya yoga is a tantric practice which is very simple but very powerful. The central theme of kriya yoga is, "Do not make any effort to concentrate. Your concentration will be the outcome of the transformed quality of matter." When you practise kriya yoga, naturally you become very sensitive. That is perfectly alright.

Now, at this time, it is important for you to relate yourself to your guru more intimately. There has to be an intimate relationship with your guru, and that relationship has to be not only on the external physical plane, but also on the inner plane. You might have read about the relationship between Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna, or my relationship with my guru. I can always feel him.

Before I embark on long trips, I must be in touch with him and get his okay. I get his endorsement for anything: an ashram, or if I have to give sannyasa to people, or if I have

to give some advice to sick people suffering from cancer, etc. The relationship has to be more intimate than that between two passionate people, more intimate than the relationship between mother and child. If you are not able to develop that relationship with the teacher you have, then search for another.



26

Witness the Volcanic Mind

Satyananda Ashram, San Jose, California, 11 September 1982.

It is not my tradition to be introduced, because I have come to introduce yoga, so it is not necessary for anyone to do that favour for me. I was born in 1923 and I left my hearth and home twenty years later in 1943. I established the first Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, twenty years after that. I will stop working for the mission in 1983, and then by 2003, my purpose for living on this material plane will be over. That is all.

I think that's the right type of introduction. It is not necessary to tell people how many books I have written, how many ashrams I have opened, how many times I have been around the world like a satellite and how many disciples I have. It is also not necessary to tell how enlightened I am; only Milton can understand Milton, and only Shakespeare can understand Shakespeare. Only if you are Satyananda can you understand Satyananda.

It is a great mistake we people make when we say that such and such a person is enlightened. It is hard to realize, to understand the one who has been enlightened. Enlightenment is not a degree of the mundane world, and it is not a perfection in the art of metaphysics, ethics and morality. It is not perfection in the way of puritanism, nor a religious order, nor does it belong to the body, to the mind, or to the senses.

Enlightenment is something else. Therefore, it is not important and not correct to say how enlightened I am.

I did not know that I would be an instrument to talk about yoga around the world, because yoga is not my tradition. Traditionally, I belong to the Vedantic philosophy since I am a sannyasin of that order. However, while I was travelling throughout India from 1956 to 1963, I found that people were not well, and when I travelled around the world from 1968 onward, I realized that the whole of mankind is not keeping well.

So, for me there was only one option – to teach something that a person can practise through his body, through his prana and through his mind. That is why I don't speak about metaphysics and Vedanta, although they are my field of study. I talk about yoga because humanity needs and understands yoga, and because it is through the practices of yoga, I am very sure, that mankind will be able to transcend the body and the senses as well as the mind.

How mental problems develop

Many centuries ago, life was different to what it is today, so the reactions of the minds of the people were also different. People could concentrate on one point without having to undergo psychological problems. They did not have so many temptations, desires, passions or fears. When those people began to practise concentration, their minds became tranquil and quiet automatically.

However, people are not like that nowadays. Their minds vibrate all the time; they are never quiet. If you want to concentrate a mind like that, you have to strive very hard. You cannot pacify that mind through the mind. Precisely because of this, thousands of people around the world are resorting to drugs in order to tranquillize the mind. A good percentage of those who have been working very hard on the mind by the practices of concentration, go to the mental hospital.

Today, when you sit for concentration and try to control the mind, to suppress the voluntary expressions of the mind, it

requires a lot of force to still those vibrations that are created within it. It is for this reason that people who try to concentrate in that way experience tension and abnormal emotions in their lives. This is precisely the concept of yoga which I am trying to convey to you.

Just think about this. Why do you want to concentrate the mind? Is it necessary? Is it not possible to transcend the mind? Is it not possible to jump over it? And when you are trying to concentrate the mind, are you not actually creating conflict with one pattern of the mind at war with another?

There is a split between your desire to be and the impossibility, and that is how mental problems develop. Then this attitude affects your personality and your actions. For this reason, it is necessary for me to tell you that the form of yoga for our age will have to be a little bit different from that practised a few hundred years ago.

Make the mind your friend

There is also another important point that everybody should remember. When you practise your mantra, or any other type of concentration which your guru has taught you, the mind begins to waver. It is exactly at that time that your mind begins to explode its experiences and knowledge. If that is what they are, why not experience them? Where do they come from? What are they composed of? Are they exoteric or are they esoteric? If they are a part of your mind, if they are inherent in you, what is their form? As far as I understand, these are the latent impressions, *samskaras*, embedded in your subconscious mind. Before you try to experience the light, the reality within yourself, you will have to exhaust those impressions either in meditation or in the process of life.

One way of yoga has to be redesigned for this purpose, and mantra must play an important part so that without having to try to concentrate the mind, everything begins to happen within yourself spontaneously. Then you will find that when you do not concentrate the mind, you will have a better quality of experience. You can live without fighting with the

mind, without fighting with yourself, simply by making your mind your friend, by understanding it and by living with its pranks and childishness. Then your whole life will have a better atmosphere.

However, most people fight with their mind. The mind wants to do this; you consult a book. It says, “No, don’t do it.” The mind wants to think something; you consult a book or scripture. It says, “No, don’t think it.” You consult a book every time. Do you do that with your children? If a baby cries, do you consult a scripture? If your baby is sneezing, do you consult a book? In the same way, stop fighting with the mind; become its friend.

You will have to find a yogic practice which will work for you within fifteen or twenty minutes. You cannot practise three or four hours of yoga every day. Modern people just do not have the time. You have to compress the quality of your practice by eliminating the non-essentials, and then each day do your yoga practice in such a way that you do not interfere with the mind.

Matter over mind

The human mind today has become volcanic. For instance, a mother tells the daughter, “Look here, I’m telling you not to do it.” The daughter goes and takes pills and commits suicide. This is the kind of people we have become nowadays. Husband and wife are sleeping and the husband snores, so she divorces him. This is the type of people we are. We are reacting without a sense of inner balance.

I am not criticizing any particular culture or clime. The whole world has become like this because this is Kali yuga. This is the age when matter rules over the mind, when the mind is totally saturated, completely overpowered by awareness of matter rather than the awareness of Self.

Another tendency of the mind of today is to become caught in an ego trip somewhere along the path. You should never think that you are evolved, that you have awakened your kundalini, or that you have attained savikalpa samadhi,

nirvikalpa samadhi or this or that samadhi. You should never think that you are a special person; everybody is subject to ignorance. Everybody is subject to the destinies of karma. Nobody is free from karma.

We say in India, “Even if the Almighty God incarnates in the form of a human being, he will be subject to the laws of karma.” So, what of an ordinary person? You are not beyond the body as long as you are in the body. The yogic tradition tells us that even a *jivanmukta*, a liberated sage, has to live in the body, has to live with the mind, so he has to follow the laws of the mind.

Significance of hatha yoga

For this reason, the practices of hatha yoga should be properly understood and practised. They are not merely physical, and not only therapeutic. By stimulating positive chemicals, by creating balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and by maintaining balances in the various pranas of the body, they improve the whole quality of your experience.

For example, when you practise your meditation, you have to work at it very hard. You are trying to concentrate on one point, but the mind keeps slipping out of focus. Now, practise any pranayama, let us say ujjayi pranayama. As you practise it, retain the breath inside for a few seconds, simultaneously applying the two bandhas: jalandhara and moola bandha. Then, release the bandhas, exhale, retain the breath outside for a few seconds and apply the three bandhas: jalandhara, uddiyana and moola bandha.

Just practise five rounds and you will find that you do not have to try to concentrate the mind, because when the *prana*, the life force, is balanced throughout the body, then tranquillity and equipoise become natural. The heart, the respiration, the glandular secretions and the responses of the nervous systems synchronize. When the physiological cooperation of the body is with you, you can concentrate without any effort.

You may have heard of many yogis who stop their vital functions, which means to 'die'; they are buried underground, and then after ten or fifteen days they come out alive. It is true. They are not all charlatans. What happens? As they breathe in, after some time the breath becomes shorter and shorter until it stops by itself. Then when they concentrate on the mid-eyebrow centre, they can see a glow of light.

As they become more and more aware of the glow at the mid-eyebrow centre, the pranas are automatically focused at that point. During investigations doctors have found that during this period the heart has stopped, the pulse is zero and the blood pressure is zero. So, through the practices of hatha yoga we can easily tackle the problems which the mind has been creating during our transcendence. And it is in this particular sense that I have been teaching yoga over the years.

Disidentify yourself

I find that many people nowadays in both the East and West have become very comfortable with the practices. I say to people, "This is your mantra." Then they ask me, "What do I do with it?" I say, "Just repeat it." Then they say, "Where do I keep the mind?" I say, "What do you mean? I haven't given you a mind. I am not going to tell you about the mind. If the mind dissipates, let it."

The practices which you are trying to do are not for the mind. The purpose is enlightenment of the self, awareness of the self. Simply witness the mind, witness the senses, witness the body, witness the samskaras. You are separate. You disidentify yourself and simply witness.

Usually, when I am thinking of something very pleasant, I become one with the process of thinking. I do not even know that I am thinking. Only after an hour or so do I realize, "Oh, I have been thinking about this or that." This is identification between the thinker and the thought. What we are trying to do is to disidentify these two. I am not the thinker; I am not the thought; I am the witness of both of

them. I am not the senses; I am not the sense object, but I am the seer of all of them.

If I sit down and practise pranayama or the mantra given to me by my guru, whatever sounds I apprehend, I just witness. When a thought comes into my mind, I begin to see that thought as different from me. And that can be done with every experience of the mind, whether it is the experience of pain or pleasure. Even if it is a divine experience, or if you see your guru or your deity, you should still disidentify yourself, separate yourself. That is witnessing, and we call it *antar mouna*. One has to practise it during repetition of the mantra.

Suppose your mantra is *Om*. You can practise it as you like. It is up to you. If you can remain constantly aware of *Om*, it is all well and good. If your mind is distracted, allow it to be distracted, but keep repeating *Om, Om, Om . . .* What will happen? If you do not interfere with the mind, there will be an experience of transcendence in which you transcend the totality of experience related to the mind. That inner experience does not belong to the mind, and the mind cannot understand it because it is beyond it.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How does one get a mantra?

First of all one should select a spiritual guide for oneself and then seek a mantra from him. In fact, one can get a mantra from many sources, but in my opinion it is better to have a mantra from the person in whom you have the confidence that he can guide you on this path.

Is astrology involved here in any way?

In mantra, the guru will find out your astrological sign and other things, and according to that he will chalk out a mantra for you.

You said that none of us are special. Do you not believe that each of us is unique? And if you don't believe that, then how do you explain that each of us is so very different?

Energy is inherent in all matter, but still matter is matter unless it is processed properly. It is necessary to say that the self-effulgent spirit is within everybody, but acceptance of that alone will not do because that only goes up to the limit of one's belief. That effulgent light has to be separated from the matter and, therefore, so far as our limitations are concerned, as long as we live in the body and are subjected to the laws of the body, we follow the same destiny, whether we have acquired or realized that effulgence or are still groping in darkness. It is only when we have gone beyond the laws of the body and mind, and the laws of destiny that we can be somewhat special. These people who have come down amidst us to help are very few and very rare.

Is it these people whom we are to seek a mantra from?

No. Mantra can be received from your guide, guru or teacher who knows the path, who knows the signs and who can help you tackle the problems of spiritual life. You don't need to go to these special people.

How important is it to be a sannyasin?

For practising yoga, for higher realization, sannyasa is not important; it is not relevant. One can transcend matter without becoming a sannyasin and everybody is not meant to be a sannyasin. In fact, of those who do renounce, quite a few of them are untrue to their commitments. In the *Bhagavad Gita* and other books, it is said that it is very hard to renounce. You can even renounce property, kith and kin, name, religion, etc., but it is hard to renounce the ego.

However, sometimes it is necessary that some people take sannyasa, detach themselves completely and contribute their best to the cause of humanity in the form of karma yoga. Even if they want to do a little bit of sadhana, they can do it as a sannyasin, but to be honest with you, one doesn't have to be a sannyasin.

What is sadhana?

Sadhana is the practice which you learn from your guru and follow implicitly in order to perfect the experience of the inner effulgence, the *atman*.

Is it recommended or ideal to travel to India to reach better relationships with a guru?

Yes, it is necessary. It's a wonderful idea. Many times in India we say, "If you want high class technologists, you should go to America." In the same way, if you want a superior kind of guru, you should go to India. Although you have many good people, many advanced, sincere and honest people here, do go to India if you can.

I'm interested in trends. What do you see going on today compared with ten years ago?

In the path of spiritual evolution, the interest in spiritual life has grown tremendously. Since the first time I was here in 1968, fourteen years ago, people now know a lot of things and they are aspiring. They are trying to discover. I won't say that the whole generation is now on the path, but I think that if you want to walk on the inner path, the first qualification is aspiration and keenness to discover the path for yourself. In the Orient and in the Occident, on both sides, I can now see this very clearly.

As far as acceptance of spiritual life is concerned, not only the masses, but even the scientists are very much involved now. In the fields of psychology, physics and many other sciences, people are trying to find some deeper meaning because they are realizing the limitations of all those sciences that only talk about matter and do not consider anything beyond matter.

Where do children fit into this philosophy?

In my opinion, children have greater potential to realize their own identity with the higher nature. If they are properly trained in the art of yoga, in any art of yoga such as hatha yoga or raja yoga, they can flourish very well and have very good experiences. Even children who are not particularly

aware of spiritual life and who have not been developing properly, mentally and emotionally, can exhibit wonderful talents if you expose them to practices like yoga nidra and inner visualization. Children, whatever type they are, geniuses or child prodigies with creative intelligence or backward children, can be benefited immensely if they can be exposed to different faculties of yoga. They can become special citizens of the world.

I was thinking only this afternoon that the education our children receive today is nice, but it is commercially orientated. It teaches them how to become clerks, politicians, government officials, executives, custom inspectors or policemen. It doesn't teach them how to tune their minds into the inner sources and to realize the potential which they have.

Therefore, there should be two types of education, and children should be exposed to both the empirical education and the yogic education. The empirical education is what is taught in the schools now, and they should get the best. However, they should receive the yogic education also and there should be arrangements for that.

You said that in 1983 you were going into a different cycle. Will you be leaving the ashram then?

I don't live in the ashram. I am like a satellite. I just pass through Munger sometimes. I do not look after the ashram. There are many swamis there who do that. I keep moving all the time. Of course, I did not come to the United States for fourteen years, but I was in Australia, Latin America and Europe for these years. In the future, I really do not know what I will do. I think, perhaps I will stop moving and teaching. I may not move so much and may stay in one place, which I find is necessary, but I can't say much on this point.

You see, I'll tell you very frankly, I do not want to consider having anything from anybody because it is not my nature. I worked in Australia for many years with Swami Vivekananda and other swamis, and we organized the whole country

completely, not just from town to town, but from door to door and from shore to shore. We have developed a cadre of swamis based on a system of discipline and yogic ideas, not hooked to orthodoxy. We have two to three hundred swamis there now and they look after about twenty-six ashrams.

When Australia was well established, I came to Europe where I organized yoga institutions, teachers and federations throughout, from Scandinavia to Spain and from Austria to England, and that works very well. We have French, Swiss, Spanish, Italian federations and the European Union of all the national federations. Everything is fixed: textbooks, courses, teachers, diplomas, course translations. I went to South America, with a base in Colombia, and worked there. That is also established.

Now, for the first time in fourteen years, I have come back to America. I don't intend to stay here, of course, but I will come back very often, and you should think about that. It is not one person's wish, but thousands and thousands of people who will have to make this sankalpa. Sometimes I will come twice a month because this is a very big, beautiful and powerful country with potential and resources in every way.

In order to work here, it will be necessary for me to devote all my energies exclusively for that. I need the help of people not only from this place, but from every part of America. I have nothing to conceal; I have come with a definite purpose of installing the yoga concept in America. I don't mean to say that you have no teachers here. There are many good teachers, yogis and scholars; there are very good institutions everywhere, and they are working their level best, but I consider that they are doing the spade work, and I have come to consolidate what they have been doing all these years.

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Satsang

Hotel Lexington, New York City, New York, 13 September 1982.

Is hatha yoga necessary in order to achieve higher states of meditation?

People here like to know more about hatha yoga and to practise it. Sometimes we find that the spiritual experiences they have are very difficult for them to handle, because they have not perfected the body and various organs which are the receptacles or the base for these experiences. Everywhere, I have been encountering that same problem.

Many people have practised meditation and other things, but they come to a point in their practice, especially when they begin to have some experiences, where they don't know what to do or how to handle them. Sometimes fear creeps in and they feel they are undergoing an experience of psychosis and not transcendence. They have to come back to hatha yoga because they are having these experiences without first balancing the two opposite poles of the energy in the body thoroughly.

When I spoke to people, their questions were mostly on hatha yoga, asanas, pranayama, mudra, bandha and the six systems of purification. Even at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, I spoke on meditation and ajapa japa, but at the end there were questions for half an hour or more, only on pranayama, asanas and purification. So, from this I think we

have to rediscover what Americans really need and not what they want. There is a difference between need and want.

Is there also a cultural background in the United States to understand spiritual experiences?

This is not a one-type community. You have various cultures, backgrounds, nationalities, religions and beliefs, and they are very open. They talk about transmigration here as much as we talk about it in India. One lady was telling me so innocently, “Maybe in some previous life I must have been in India, and when I die I want to be born again in India”.

It is incorrect to say that Americans are not exposed to higher philosophies. They are. They know a lot about meditation, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga and many other things, but now they are coming to realize that they have to perfect the base, hatha yoga.

In the beginning, they were told that the postures and pranayama were only intended to make the body fit, but now they have discovered another aspect of it, that through the practices of hatha yoga, the awakening of chakras, the awakening of sushumna nadi and the awakening of kundalini can take place systematically. Asanas and pranayamas are not only practised for the sake of sound health, but they are very important for inner development as well. Even now, there are many people in various countries who practise asanas just as physical exercises, and that’s how they talk about it, but it is changing.

The method of practice is also important, isn’t it? If you treat it as physical exercises, it doesn’t have any spiritual effect.

Yes, because the reference to asanas can be found in the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali, in the Upanishads and also in the ancient tantric books. Wherever they have been mentioned, it has been a tool for creating a high quality resistance within the physical body, not only to fight diseases, but also to handle the effects of higher experiences. Sage Patanjali doesn’t talk

about the asanas as exercises. He says that when you practise postures, there has to be 'steadiness and comfort'. The word *asana* means 'posture', not movement.

The way we have been teaching certain postures in the beginning is not so complete. I have always felt a little confused as to how far to encourage people to try to complete the posture, even if they are stiff. Should one emphasize that they be just comfortable and steady?

First, we must teach people those postures by which they can maintain a smooth flow of energy in the body. When there are energy blocks and this energy does not flow, they have stiffness, pain and all kinds of funny feelings. If they can maintain the smooth flow of energy through every channel for a long period, their body automatically becomes very efficient. Then it can handle the most difficult yoga postures.

For that purpose, there is a group of asanas known as pawanmuktasana, the anti-rheumatic and anti-gastric series. A lot of work and scientific studies have been done on these asanas from the point of view of energy flow. There is a well-known doctor in Japan by the name of Dr Hiroshi Motoyama. I know him and have been to his place in Japan. He is studying yoga from a scientific point of view, and he has mentioned clearly that when you practise the preliminary yoga postures, like pawanmuktasana, they not only loosen the joints of the body, but they help you maintain a smooth flow of energy throughout. Even the physiotherapy practices are a form of pawanmuktasana.

A lot of work has been done on these postures and it has been found that the subtle flows of energy, ida and pingala, become very smooth as the energy blocks are removed. The pawanmuktasana series should be taught first and, in my opinion, if the yoga students practise these first two groups of postures, it will not even be necessary for them to practise anything further. I have had unbelievable experiences from teaching this series to students who come to the ashram. In the beginning, I used to teach it as preliminary exercises, but

then I found that just by the practice of pawanmuktasana, the students became free from chronic and incurable sicknesses.

Are these pawanmuktasana practices in your books?

Yes, in my book *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*. Dr Hiroshi Motoyama has written a scientific commentary about the energy flows in these two series. That book is now being translated into English.

Can surya namaskara, the sun salutation series, be practised without going through pawanmuktasana?

Yes, it depends on the health of the person. Some people are very unhealthy, old, sick or weak. They need pawanmuktasana. However, those who are young and strong can practise surya namaskara as the first of their yoga practices. The two could also be combined for a balanced practice.

After what age should we teach children?

Seven. In Paris, there is a school where we have a swami working as a teacher. She is a French lady. She introduced yoga for children into the schools. In the beginning, people from the Department of Education were very sceptical, but later they found by IQ tests that the children are doing very well. So now the Department of Education of the French government has allowed schools to teach yoga if they want to include it in the syllabus.

The base of our experiment was the Condorcet High School in Paris. The principal was very interested and came to India. She teaches surya namaskara and yoga nidra with inner visualization. The Inspector of Education prepared a report on the effects of yoga on the children. He interviewed the guardians, the school teachers, the course students, and noted the IQ tests. He was fantastically optimistic. Now, whenever I go to Paris, I have one seminar at that high school.

In 1981, in France, there was a very big general meeting of the primary school teachers, where they discussed how to promote yoga in education and how to make it available to

students. They resolved that it was necessary that the teachers should be trained first, then all the primary school teachers who volunteer should be sent there for one month refresher courses. Then they could teach yoga to their students. They are convinced that the yoga practices are not just exercises, but that they act on the nature of the endocrine glands and have a lot to do with the hormonal secretions from the pituitary gland.

What are yantras and do they stimulate dreams more than mandalas?

Yantras are geometrical designs which help a person to develop, explore and experience his unconscious archetypes. Mandalas are more powerful, but certainly, when children draw yantras they get many more dreams, which means that they are gradually developing their unconscious mind. Then, later, when you test the children (mental and intelligence tests), you find that their responses have altered also. There are colour responses, object responses, emotional responses, social responses, etc., and they are all better.

What are archetypes?

In my opinion, they are the residue of karma in a person's mind. Whatever experiences you are having throughout your life are being registered all the time within your mind, as if there were a hidden camera there. All of the impressions are filmed and stored inside, but not exactly in their original form. They are stored in a collective, symbolic form, and these are the archetypes.

The archetypes can be exploded through mantra, yantra and mandala. Mantra is the lightest method. It is powerful but not so drastic. Yantra is a little more powerful, and mandalas are very powerful. That is precisely the reason that people concentrate on idols and statues. We also find that people who work on statues with their chisel and hammer have very good intuition, more than a painter, a poet or a musician.

They all have intuition, but the person who makes statues all the time has more because he is working at every point. He

is working in all the dimensions: depth, height and width. He has a threefold concept. He is developing his mind in three dimensions. Shankaracharya said that God is formless, but still he asked us to meditate on idols. If God is formless, then why meditate on an idol? For the expansion of mind, so that your mind can function beyond the demarcated boundaries.

I have a very old manuscript which has all kinds of yantras. It's very funny; you draw a yantra and you can get rid of all the rats. I am still working and wondering whether they should be printed or not because the people who sell the pesticides will go out of business. It is written there how to get rid of bugs, snakes, cockroaches, etc., and there are yantras also for conception, fevers, etc. These things must come out in their proper time, so we can give them the correct interpretation.

Is it the physical existence of a pattern that causes things to happen, or is it a pattern that resonates within the mind that makes these things happen?

I think it is not only the physical pattern, not only the resonance within yourself, but also, some combination takes place somewhere in nature. Just as various energies and chemicals interact and produce a third effect, internal resonance and external yantras interact with each other.



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Satsang

Hotel Lexington, New York City, New York, 14 September 1982.

How can we teach the system of yoga more effectively in the USA?

Here in America there are thousands of yoga teachers who are working in their own ways, and they sometimes don't understand or accept each other. They don't know how they are to be linked. I have a very clear idea about it. Just as various parts of the car are put together and then it attains homogeneity and usefulness, the various elements of yoga, without change in the quality of their nature, teaching and philosophy, can be very effective in bringing about a great transformation in the evolutionary process of mankind.

Now the work has to begin as to how spiritual or yoga movements should be properly understood and organized. That is necessary so that the spiritual nature of the universe and the earth can be maintained. Every philosophy is relative, of course, nothing is absolute and perfect, and nothing can be perfect. What is important is that the spiritual movements which are dedicated to the good of mankind must have a philosophy of peaceful coexistence, and if they become powerful, then they should not hurt or destroy other movements.

Is it true that people become attached to a guru, a form, a way, at the expense of other people and other things?

It is good to have an attachment with guru, but just because I love my own wife, it doesn't mean that all other women are wretched. Real attachment, as opposed to love, is at the expense of others, but that happens because we don't know each other. We have to develop a philosophy of coexistence. There should be no competition in spiritual movements. Also, when we teach, we teach what we have to teach. I must confine myself to what I know, but many people, instead of teaching, start criticizing others. It is unnecessary and it does not benefit the aspirant.

Teach them practical things, and if somebody says to me, "What about the practices that the other guy teaches?", I have to tell him that it is good for a particular group of people. Many people ask me why I do not preach about God as others do. I say, "Yes, there are many people who want God to be preached before them, so there are many teachers who do just that, and if you want that, you can definitely go there. I don't mind."

In ancient India, during the time of Shankaracharya, the different schools of philosophy used to debate with each other and the losers would follow the winners' philosophy.

During Shankaracharya's time, there were different conditions altogether. In India, especially these days, we believe that every guru teaches for the evolution of the spiritual life of his disciple. The way he teaches could be different from the way of my guru, because the aspirants do not belong to the same category.

If you are rational by temperament, there is no use telling you that you should weep and cry for God. You won't understand that. That's not your temperament. If you are dynamic by temperament, there's no use in telling you that you must practise meditation. You can't sit still. According to the nature, temperament and karmas, you start your spiritual life from a particular point on a particular way. Not only the path, but the object you have in mind cannot be the same.

Some people like God to be pure, unblemished and faultless. Some people like God to be seen, like Krishna with Radha, playing, dancing and doing mischief. They sing songs of Krishna, how he stole the butter and milk, how he used to play with the gopis and loved Radha, and how they would dance during the full moon night, etc. They like it because that's their nature, but there are Hindus who do not like that at all. They say, "How can God be like that?" For them, there is some other form which they can worship and think about. According to the variety of natures of individuals, you have to develop and discover new paths and methods.

There are people who practise mantra and they get better; their minds become unified. But there are many people who get distracted when they practise mantra, so for them that is not the method. You have to discover some new ways for them. People in western countries are dependent on drugs. In India they are not. Westerners have taken drugs because they did not know the practices by which they could transcend the mind and objective experiences. We don't teach the drug system, not because we don't accept it, but because we think that it is not necessary. There are various methods and all of them are relevant so far as the aspirant is concerned. One and the same method for all is not a spiritual method. That is called religion.

What is the relevance of reading spiritual books?

Books can give you knowledge, but they can never give you experience. When you can handle your own non-empirical experiences, then all that is written in the books, you can know within yourself. Experiential knowledge does not come from outside, it is an expression of what is already inherent within you. These words were inside; they were formless. Then I brought them out with the process of extraction through thoughts, translated them, and now they are in black and white.

However, when knowledge is put into black and white, it is mutilated. You experience something, but you write

something else. The inner experience and external scriptures are completely different because you cannot render the inner experiences in black and white, without mutilating them. Then, when somebody else reads it, he mutilates it still more because he has his own way of understanding.

Can you tell us about disciplines?

Disciplines are good, but sometimes they become the ultimate. Then they revolve around rituals and external tendencies, putting on clean clothes daily, taking a bath, pure food, a time for everything, all are necessary, but they are means and not ends. People have to know what they are doing things for. Many practise yoga postures, and don't know what the end of it is. They think that the end is just to perfect a posture, and then everything is over. This is where people's understanding will begin to change.

Do you think that a philosophy is more effective if it is patronized by the government of country?

When Shankaracharya came in the eighth century, he objected to this because many religions in that era were patronized by the kings and the governments. He said, "No, this cannot happen. A philosophy cannot be tailored to suit the people in the interest of a country or nation." A philosophy is only meant for one's spiritual evolution, whether it is Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. A nation must have a constitution and laws, but the spiritual tenets must be kept aloof, and swamis and gurus must handle those, not magistrates, commissioners or police officers. They must be guided by the laws of the country.

What did Shankaracharya do for quarrels in different philosophies?

All that Shankaracharya said was, "You talk so much about shoonya, and there is a quarrel between us. Why don't you consider that shoonya is God? So, make it shoonya equals God equals samadhi equals nirvana equals moksha. Then

the whole fight is over.” There has to be a balance between idealism and practicality. Idealism is good, but it can also lead to failure, frustration, and sometimes the idealism can also be a reaction to the quality of the society. Sometimes you react to the nature of the society by being an idealist, sometimes by being a realist.



Swami Satyananda from Coast-to-Coast

ELIZABETH (NEW JERSEY)

August 22nd: Sri Swamiji, accompanied by Swami Satyasangananda, arrived at New York's JFK International Airport, and greeted by his devotees from New York City, New York, and Elizabeth, New Jersey, and by his sannyasin disciples. From the airport, he was taken to Elizabeth, New Jersey, where people came for his darshan and blessings.

August 23rd: Sri Swamiji was invited for meals at the residence of his devotees Mr and Mrs Arbelaez. In the evening, he gave an inspiring talk at Channel 47 television. His message was also broadcast in Spanish for the Latin people living in the East Coast of the USA.

August 24th: During the day, people came to Sri Swamiji for darshan and guidance. In the evening, he gave a satsang at the residence of the Arbelaez family.

August 25th: A seminar was organized by the Satyananda Yoga Group of Elizabeth at the YMCA. Practical guidance on asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation was given by Dr. Swami Vivekananda. In the morning, Sri Swamiji initiated people with mantra, and spiritual name.

At noon, he addressed a group of doctors, other hospital staff, yoga aspirants and devotees at St Elizabeth Hospital, in the doctors' conference room. He emphasized the need

for yogic practices for physiological and psychological attunement and health. In the evening, he gave a satsang to the Satyananda Yoga Group of Elizabeth.

WOODSTOCK AND MONROE (NEW YORK)

August 26th: In the morning, Sri Swamiji left Elizabeth to go to Woodstock, a famous arts centre in the United States, and blessed the home ashram of Swami Bhaktananda Saraswati. Then he was driven to Ananda Ashram, Monroe, where he met Ramamurti Mishra and his guru brother, Swami Nadabrahmananda Saraswati. In the evening, Sri Swamiji inaugurated and blessed the function of Rama Lila at the Ananda Ashram, which had been organized by the students and members of ISCA.

CHARLOTTESVILLE (VIRGINIA)

August 27th: Sri Swamiji flew from New York's La Guardia Airport to Charlottesville, and there he was greeted by the members of the Satyananda Yoga Groups from Charlottesville and Roanoke, the Society of Human Potential, and Ignacio and Maria Teresa Copete from Bogota, Colombia.

That evening, Sri Swamiji gave a conference and satsang at the Old Cabell Hall of the University of Virginia. This program was attended by hundreds of people who came from all over. Delegations had also come from the states of Tennessee, Ohio and New Hampshire for his darshan. There he blessed all with the message of liberation through yoga.

CHARLOTTESVILLE AND WASHINGTON, DC

August 28th: From 7.30 in the morning, people came to Sri Swamiji for mantra, name initiations and spiritual guidance. At 9.00 am he conducted an inspiring satsang at the residence of Danamurti Hawley. At noon he left Charlottesville by car for Washington, DC, and there he was greeted by the Satyananda

Yoga Group of Washington, DC. His hosts were Surendra Sharma and Raj Joshi.

In the evening, Sri Swamiji gave a talk at the Catholic University of America, which was attended by many devotees, students, yoga teachers and Indian dignitaries.

August 29th: During the day, people came for mantra and name initiations, and in the evening Sri Swamiji was invited for dinner at the residence of the Dhokhra family.

ANN ARBOR (MICHIGAN)

August 30th: Sri Swamiji flew from Washington, DC to Detroit, Michigan, where he was welcomed by the Satyananda Yoga Group of Ann Arbor. From Detroit, he was driven to Ann Arbor, to the Michigan League of the University of Michigan, where he stayed as the guest of the University. There, people came to have his darshan.

August 31st: In the evening, Sri Swamiji conducted an inspiring program at the University of Michigan, Language Department Auditorium. Delegations of people from Ann Arbor, Kalamazoo, Detroit and Lansing came to hear him and have Sri Swamiji's darshan. His message was on meditation.

September 1st: From morning, people came to Sri Swamiji for mantra initiation, darshan and guidance. In the afternoon, he was invited by Damodar Bolkar to give his blessings to the members of the Hindu Community. There, Sri Swamiji gave satsang and expounded on the techniques of raja, karma, bhakti and hatha yogas. After the satsang concluded a pot-luck dinner was held in his honour.

DENVER (COLORADO)

September 2nd: Sri Swamiji arrived in Denver from Detroit and was greeted by the members, devotees and students of

the Satyananda Yoga Group of Denver, and by the members of the Hindu Society of Colorado. In the evening, he was taken to the residence of Mr Manu Rawal where a big group of Indians and Americans had gathered to hear him and have his darshan.

September 3rd: Between 11.00 am and 1.00 pm, a yoga seminar was conducted at the Unitarian Church by Dr Swami Vivekananda, who gave theoretical and practical guidance on asana and pranayama.

In the afternoon, Sri Swamiji was driven to Denver's Metro State College, where a talk was organized by Dr Yoga Ahuja for the students and general public. After that, he was driven to Boulder to the Community Free School for a talk organized by Ananda and Kamala Miller. A large crowd had gathered to listen to Sri Swamiji's message.

September 4th: In the morning, Sri Swamiji went to the residence of Ananda and Kamala Miller to give private interviews, mantra initiations and darshan throughout the morning. There, a lunch was held in his honour. In the afternoon he gave a satsang at the residence of Surendra Purohit. In the evening, a talk was given at the Unitarian Church by Sri Swamiji, who spoke on kriya yoga as a means of evolving human awareness and dormant potentials. A delegation of people from the State of Utah had also come to hear Sri Swamiji's message.

September 5th: In the morning, Sri Swamiji initiated the following people into the Saraswati order of sannyasa: Michael Garrity (Swami Turiyananda Saraswati) and Beverly Garrity (Swami Agnimitrananda Saraswati). Then Swamiji blessed the house of Harsha and Debbie Rawal, and continued on to the Hindu Society of Colorado to give an inspiring talk on yoga and his mission. The program was organized by Mr Sagara, a disciple of Swami Sivananda Saraswati and Manu Rawal, the President of the Hindu Society. After the program, Sri Swamiji left Denver for Los Angeles.

LOS ANGELES AND OJAI (CALIFORNIA)

September 5th: In Los Angeles, Sri Swamiji gave an inspiring satsang at the residence of Mr and Mrs Natwar Mathur, where a big group of Indians and Americans had gathered to hear him.

September 6th: At noon Sri Swamiji was driven to the Ojai Foundation in Ojai, which was founded by Annie Besant, for an afternoon seminar on the Ashtanga Yoga of Sage Patanjali. Afterwards, people asked many questions and sought his guidance.

September 7th: Sri Swamiji was invited for lunch at the residence of Mr Raj Sharma, and there a video session was recorded for the California State University. This was organized by Professor Prem Saint.

Afterwards, Sri Swamiji blessed the house of Rukmini Maline and gave inspiration to the people gathered there for his darshan. In the evening, Sri Swamiji was invited to the East-West Cultural Centre in Los Angeles to talk on tantra and his experiences.

September 8th: Throughout the day, Sri Swamiji gave private interviews, mantra initiations, guidance and darshan to seekers, aspirants and students at the Altered States Relaxation Centre. Then, in the evening, he gave a talk at the Yoga Teachers' Cooperative, organized by Jeff Labno and Swami Brahma.

SAN MATEO, SAN FRANCISCO, SAN JOSE (CALIFORNIA)

September 9th: Sri Swamiji arrived at San Francisco Airport and greeted by the Satyananda Ashram members, Kamal and Jivat Mukhi, and Savitri Nainani of Spain. In the evening, he was invited to the residence of Anil and Sucheta Kapuria of San Jose for satsang and dinner.

September 10th: In the morning, Sri Swamiji was driven to San Francisco to the residence of Jamuna Devi for a press conference, after which he gave a radio interview on KCBS. Then, in the evening, he gave an inspiring talk at the First Unitarian Church in San Francisco, where a crowd had gathered to hear his views on yoga.

September 11th: In the morning, Sri Swamiji gave an inspiring talk and satsang at the Yoga Society of San Francisco, and in the evening he spoke at and blessed the Satyananda Ashram of San Jose.

September 12th: Throughout the morning, people came to have private interviews and darshan. Many prominent lawyers, doctors and others came to see Sri Swamiji. In the evening, Sri Swamiji left San Francisco for New York City.

NEW YORK CITY (NEW YORK)

September 13th: Sri Swamiji was received by Swami Bhaktananda, who took him to the Hotel Lexington. There, in the evening, Sri Swamiji gave darshan and satsang to a group of people from the New York and New Jersey area.

September 14th: In the morning, Sri Swamiji conducted satsang for yet another group of yoga aspirants, and in the afternoon he departed for Europe, accompanied by Swami Satyasangananda.



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The satsangs of a realized master are a gift that inspires and blesses all who receive his wisdom and grace. From the 1960s to the 1980s Swami Satyananda's extensive international touring yielded a wealth of spiritual teachings spanning a vast range of subjects. Renowned for their depth of insight, clarity and compassion, the eternal truths revealed in these satsangs are presented in this comprehensive set of volumes *Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati*, for the upliftment of seekers everywhere.

Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati: Volume III is a compilation of talks, question and answer sessions and media interviews given by Swami Satyananda during his 1982 tour of the USA. Inspiring and informative talks on raja yoga, tantra, scientific research into yoga and many other aspects of spiritual life provide a wealth of guidance on how to integrate yogic principles into a modern lifestyle. The questions cover a multitude of topics from the mysteries of the universe to the necessities of mundane existence. Answered with refreshing clarity, Swami Satyananda's insights and wisdom shine a light on the spiritual journey.



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